

India Now

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Monthly News Publication of Indian People's
Association in North America (IPANA)

This PDF is prepared by Sukhwant Hundal in memory of his father
Shivdev S. Hundal and mother Harbans Kaur Hundal.

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INDIA NOW

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Monthly News Publication of the Indian People's Association in North America

Indira Congress after Abdullah

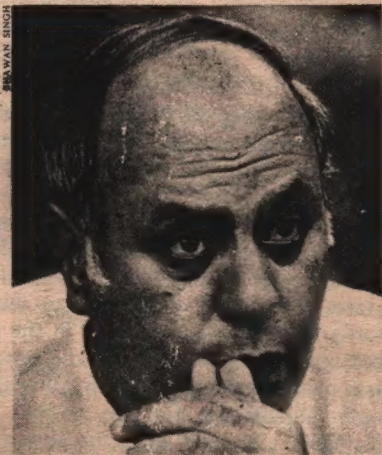
Congress(I) Creates Trouble in J&K

KISHAN BAJWA

Indira Gandhi and her party do not seem to have gone after any other leader as seriously as Dr. Farooq Abdullah, the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. In this case, Congress(I) may not even spare him physically. There have been two physical attacks on him. Abdullah was assaulted by Congress goons led by Priya Ranjan Das Munshi on Jan. 15 at the Calcutta airport when he was returning from the opposition parties meeting there. His car was stoned, and Congress party demonstrators tore Dr. Abdullah's shirt and spat in his face before police rescued him. Congress(I) members led by Arun Nehru also demonstrated against Dr. Abdullah at the Delhi airport. The demonstrators were demanding the removal of his government for what they described as the separatist and antipeople policies of the National Conference party.

Recently Dr. Abdullah accused Indira Congress of hatching a conspiracy to kill

him. In a rally on Jan. 20 in Srinagar, Dr. Abdullah charged that the Congress sought his death with the sole motive of gaining power in the state. He also charged that Indira Congress was trying to topple his government by offering up to Rs 2 million to each National Conference legislator to defect.



INDIRA CONGRESS CREATES DISTURBANCES

Gandhi and her party have been charging that Dr. Abdullah and his party have been hobnobbing with secessionists and anti-nationals with a reference to extremists Sikhs and pro-Pakistani elements. Just before Abdullah was to leave for Calcutta to attend the opposition conclave, Congress(I) started an agitation in the state. Congress(I)'s hired men went to district offices, police stations smashing furniture, file etc, setting fire to buildings and cars. Following the recent disturbances, Congress(I) leaders in the state started demanding dismissal of the government and imposition of President's rule. Some of Congress(I) leaders even met the President.

Abdullah put the blame of recent vio-
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Dr. Farooq Abdullah

Opposition Meeting Focuses on Economic Issues

A 3-day meeting of 18 national and regional opposition parties and non-Congress(I) Chief Ministers concluded in Calcutta on Jan. 15 with a warning to Indira Congress to desist from further attempts to topple state governments run by opposition parties. The statement went on to add that any destabilization efforts would be resisted by the united might of the people.

The highlight of the Calcutta meeting was a 11-point charter of economic demands on the center aimed at what they called "taking the country out of the grave crisis into which it has been plunged." The charter of economic demands included government food subsidies, guaranteed supplies of essential commodities through a strong public distribution program. It demanded a total restructuring of the country's present economic policies and called for increased production mass consumption

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CPI (M) behind slayings

[Last month, we mentioned in an article on CPM violence in Maharashtra that a CPI(ML) group had killed members of another CPI(ML) group in West Bengal. The statement, based on a report in India Abroad of December 30, was incorrect. A full account is given below. We regret the error. -Ed.]

The West Bengal state unit of PCC-CPI(ML) has held CPM responsible for the brutal murder of their seven party workers at Gopalpur in Nadia district on the night of December 21.

Sarkar, a PCC leader, told the Indian Express on December 23 that it was not only the local people of Gopalpur but a section of CPM's district leadership who believed that the local Anchal Pradhan, Sukumar Chakravorty of CPM, had played a definite role in the killings of the seven CPI(ML) workers. There was no trace of Chakravorty since the incident, Sarkar added.

Sarkar said there might be certain ideological differences between his party and the second central committee, but they never ran after one another's blood.

According to Sarkar, Niranjani Bhomik, a member of the second central committee, had recently left the group and joined his party's local unit in Nadia. On December 21, while a meeting was being held at the house of one Sidhu Santra, about 25 persons, all armed with lethal weapons, encircled the house and demanded that Niranjani be handed over to them and that they would kill him.

Ajit Chowdhury, the district committee secretary, came out and said Niranjani had joined his party and hence he had every right to protect him. At this, some attackers shot at him and stabbed him repeatedly. Chowdhury died on the spot. The miscreants then dragged Niranjani

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Kondapalli Seetharamaiah Escapes Police Custody

Leads People's War Group

The head of the People's War Group of CPI(ML) has escaped from police custody. Kondapalli Seetharamaiah had been imprisoned for three years.

A day before the escape, on January 3, Seetharamaiah received a short telegram through the Mushirabad Central Jail authorities saying "Father Expired." His father died many years ago. Only later did the officials realize that the telegram was a coded message about the rescue.

The escape was from the Osmania General Hospital, where the sixty-year-old leader was being treated for chest pains. He was guarded by two policemen and chained to his bed. Only when he went to the toilet was he freed, and on the morning of January 4, when Seetharamaiah asked to visit the toilet, he was escorted by only one constable. Six Naxalites were waiting in the toilet, dressed as doctors and policemen. They shot the constable and took Seetharamaiah out of the hospital.

Seetharamaiah was first arrested in Nagpur in 1977 but two years later he



Seetharamaiah arrested at Hyderabad
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Former P&T Exec Reveals

Extensive Mail-Opening, Phone-Tapping

V.E. Arunachalam, who recently retired as a member of the Post and Telegraphs Board, has revealed the extensive mail-opening and phone-tapping that he came across personally during his career.

Arunachalam says that the telephone book entry, Postal Research Center, under the general heading of the Post and Telegraphs Department, refers to an office that is not a P&T establishment at all. Its name is only a misleading cover under which it carries on mail censorship, controlled by the Intelligence Bureau.

There are at least twelve such centers, based in important cities as well as border towns. No written orders are issued. Whatever mail the PRC asks for is handed over to it.

Arunachalam was in Bombay when Janata came to power in 1977 and thought that the new Janata government would not allow such illegalities to be perpetrated. He wrote to the P&T headquarters asking how, when both the Prime Minister and the Home Minister were going about proclaiming that government officials should refuse to obey illegal orders, could the patent monstrosity of Postal Research Centers be allowed to continue? And how could postal officials be a party to illegal censorship of not just a few letters but some hundreds of thousands of letters every day? He got no reply.

In May 1977, he met George Fernandes, then in charge of Communications, and gave him copies of the letters. Nothing happened.

Later, when Brijlal Verma became Communications Minister, Arunachalam contacted him, who only said that the letters of Communists had to be opened in the interest of state security.

According to Arunachalam, the PRCs were first established during Jawaharlal Nehru's time.

Arunachalam also recounts a telephone strike in Kerala, during which the engineer in charge of the exchange fed

him with information about what went on in union meetings. When the strike was over, Arunachalam asked the engineer how he got the information and was told that a parallel phone had been installed, linked to the union office telephone.

Arunachalam writes that he was not directly in charge of telephones except for brief periods and cannot speak about phone-tapping with the same authority as about postal censorship. But in one glaring case, also in Kerala, just before a new crossbar exchange was about to be commissioned, an Intelligence man approached him and expressed the fear that the new crossbar equipment would shut off all parallel phones put up in his office to listen in to the conversations of "seditious people." Arunachalam had an engineer investigate and found that there were several parallel phones, including those of some ministers, none of them authorized under the Indian Telegraph Act.

The late C.M. Stephen, once a voluble Minister for Communications, used to tell MPs that the law permitted censorship and could not be relaxed.

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Hiren Gohain

The Election Jigsaw:

A Review of Political Perspectives and Processes

A. AZAD

Recent elections in the Hindi belt have once again brought into focus the periodic political trade that juggles people and politicians in the national "circus" that appears to operate as a form of democracy in India. Commentators are scanning the results for possible pointers with respect to the forthcoming general elections. Of course mainstream reports and analyses abound but alternative perspectives are difficult to find. Susheela Kaushik's "Elections in India - Its Social Basis," published by K.P. Bagchi in 1982, is one recent exception.

Among the political organizations on the left in India, elections have mainly been viewed and characterized as a process of winning consent from the enfranchised population for the ruling government. The principal means of securing consent, in this view, has been deception, which in turn refers to a political process that perpetuates false consciousness. While there is an aspect of accuracy in this view, it largely fails to explain the increased participation of the population or the left's own ambivalence towards elections.

In hierarchical and class-divided societies, political rule is usually carried out through an unevenly fluctuating combination of consent and force, which includes political and social accommodation, a sense of representation, deference, a sense of inevitability, resignation and fear. However what remains more relevant within a perspective of transforming society is the concrete grasp of the process of ideological mobilization - that which maintains society and that which challenges society's basic moorings.

Mainstream studies of the election process and its results in India remain dominated by a functionalist-behavioral school of political science based in the United States. The approach of these studies is based on vast amounts of computerized data, which through statistical manipulation attempts to describe voter behavior. The purpose is to provide the government with indicators regarding the balance of consensus politics. There is hardly any substantive material developed through such studies to provide clear insights regarding the linkages between elections and the politics of transforming the social order.

In a positive sense, Kaushik's study of elections in India is an attempt to develop

a macro-analysis of Indian politics by presenting the election process as a part of India's political economy. The material is covered in 3 parts, divided into 11 chapters. Part 1 is an attempt to sketch a theoretical framework; Part 2 examines the election process and its results; Part 3 is an exercise to assess the political role and impact of the left (mainly CPI and CPM) by examining its position in the electoral process.

In the section on theory, Kaushik critiques the behavioral school of politics (both psychological and social dynamic versions) by exposing their near exclusive concern with effects rather than causal forces as well as the circularity of their analytical arguments. Quite accurately

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[Editor: Hiren Gohain has written extensively on Assam since the agitation started. Although he has sympathized with some demands of the agitation, he has by and large denounced the agitation led by the AASU and AAGSP as communal, chauvinistic, anti-poor and anti-working class. From what we can judge, his views on the demands and character of the agitation have been opposed to the views presented in India Now.]

While atrocities of the Assam movement have had sufficient publicity, little of the barbarities and sinister intrigues of the ruling party at the Center and in Assam has penetrated the fog of official disinformation into the so-called national media. There seems to be a kind of tacit disagreement among parties of the left and the right, and among media that broadly favor such points of view, that with Hiteswar Saikia firmly in power, all the horrors of the elections and its patent violations of basic democratic norms can now be swept under the carpet...

It is now clear that the ruling party does not intend to give more than a few minor concessions to the demands of the Assamese. Its strategy is to prolong the stalemate in a war of attrition and then provoke a confrontation from time to time, when it can overwhelm by brute force the enthusiasm and inspiration of the agitators. The stalemate scares the faint-hearted, wearies the waverers and goads the minorities into marching into the Congress(I) camp.

MOVEMENT'S TACTIC

Of course, the think-tanks in the various intelligence agencies believe that there is no more need to take the Assam movement seriously. This is what partly explains the massive propaganda campaign to boost the image of the Saikia ministry. The burden of the message is that the movement, thanks to Saikia's firm handling, is now finished, the extremists have been routed, and normalcy is returning fast. The author of this dispatch has as keen a desire for peace as anyone else, but only a very thick pair of blinkers can keep out of view the obvious. The movement has not petered out, though it is now facing much greater hurdles than it ever did in the past. The movement leaders have kept a firm grip over the organizational setup. The AASU leaders, who are in command over more efficient outfit than the other constituents of the Gana Sangram Parishad, have naturally gained in stature. The Assamese businessmen, landlords and bureaucrats, to say nothing of the intelligentsia, appear to trust the AASU leaders much more than the professional politicians. Candidates nominated by the AASU leadership have won almost all important college elections. And the recent meeting with the leaders of the national opposition at Gauhati University campus can be seen partly as a maneuver to regain the legitimacy the movement had lately been in danger of losing. The joint communique following the closed-door discussions not only condemned the widespread police atrocities in the state, but also specifically mentioned and condemned in unequivocal language the advocates of violence and extremism.

EMPHASIS ON LEGAL MEASURES

There are interesting trends in the movement. For example, there has recently been a decision to organize legal cells in all local branches of the Gana Sangram Parishad to fight government repression and the spate of criminal cases filed against the activist and the victims of atrocities.

The nature of the discipline to which

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Assam

It will be a year this month since the carnage in Assam which took the lives of over 4000 innocent people. These lives were lost because Indira Gandhi needed a victory at any cost, following a humiliating defeat in Congress(I)'s strongholds in Karnataka and Andhra in January elections last year. The tri-partite negotiations were suddenly called off and a snap poll without any revision in electoral rolls was announced for Assam few days after the results for elections in Andhra and Karnataka came out.

It has been clear from the information revealed following the killings that both the Election Commission and Intelligence officials were reluctant to go ahead with the elections especially after the violence broke out on the first two election days. The Election Commission even wrote a memo to the Home Ministry and Law Ministry recommended that the constitutional requirement had been met and that the elections be postponed. Their recommendations however fell on deaf ears.

What has happened since then? Saikia government has attempted to bring the situation under control with the aid of paramilitary forces and the army using liberally the NSA and other black repressive laws. Very much like the neighboring states, Assam has become a police state, virtually under army control. Saikia also appears to have been successful in creat-

ing splits within the AASU partly because of the errors of the AASU leadership. However the public sentiment is still very much against the illegal government and the Center as has been evident from the general strikes honored when both Rajiv Gandhi and Indira Gandhi visited the state. The Assam agitation may temporarily subside as it happened in the past, but until the issues on which the agitation was called, such as ensuring cultural and national identity, and the refugee problem, are not dealt with, the new agitation is likely to be much more intense. If more lives are lost and the Assamese people get totally alienated from the rest of India, as has progressively happened in Nagaland, Mizoram, and Manipur, the blame will entirely be on the Gandhi government for its callous and insensitive attitude.

A fresh attitude towards the Assamese problem is needed based on respect for people's culture, autonomy and rejection of chauvinistic attitudes, and sensitivity towards all minorities. The refugee problem is a national problem and a formula should be evolved with the active participation of all political parties so that the whole nation can share the burden and not just Assam. Electoral rolls should be revised and a fresh election in Assam be held under the supervision of an independent non-party commission. Assam needs a healing of its wounds which may otherwise become very deep.

Cong(I) Celebrates Centenary Trampling Democratic Norms

R.N.Raju

The plenary session of the Cong(I) was recently held in Calcutta, the meeting coinciding with the celebrations by the party of the completion of 100 years of its existence. The formative meeting had also been held in Calcutta in 1883, though the formal organization of a political party did not take place until two years later. The recent Calcutta session succeeded in demonstrating how the party today represents not the traditions of the earlier years of the party involved in the independence movement but the new traditions that have been firmly established by the present Prime Minister during the last 15 years of her dominance over the party and the country. What are these traditions instilled by Prime Minister Gandhi into her party's life?

The Calcutta meeting showed that an unchanging factor in Cong(I) is the absolute supremacy of Indira Gandhi. All the proceedings of the meeting, the passage of various resolutions and the speeches of different party functionaries indicated the extent to which the Prime Minister remains the sole controller of the destiny of the party. The complete absence of a core of independent leadership of the party and its replacement by the concentrated power in the hands of Gandhi has

been an important outcome of the last 15 years of Gandhi's rule. A necessary consequence has been the elimination of any democratic process in the functioning of the Cong(I).

The personal control of the party by the Prime Minister has found a most revealing expression in the systematic preparation of a dynastic succession of Gandhi by her son, Rajiv. The Calcutta meeting served as the most important event as yet in the formal affairs of Cong(I), in which the role of Rajiv Gandhi as second only to the Prime Minister was emphasized. For days preceding the Calcutta meeting, most newspapers were filled with advertisements by the Cong(I) Reception Committee offering the mantle of leadership to Rajiv Gandhi. The only other similar incidence in the recent times when a leader was imposed on the party and the people through advertisements was when the late Sanjay Gandhi was being groomed as the successor to the

Prime Minister. The servility of various Union Cabinet Ministers and State Chief Ministers to Rajiv Gandhi and their attempts to curry favor with him showed how strong is the concept of dynastic succession promoted by Indira Gandhi.

The servile role of various central and state ministers as well as of members of parliament and state legislators is indicative of the criteria set by Gandhi's leadership for doling out these official positions. It is widely acknowledged that these positions have become primarily instruments for personal power and wealth. Since no goals are to be realized through these positions other than those of continuing to retain the positions themselves, no qualifications are needed for occupying them other than that of unquestionable personal loyalty to the Prime Minister and her son. The direct control that Gandhi wields in the day to day affairs of the various states is revealed in the high frequency of visits made to Delhi by the

various factions and individuals in her party in various states who seek to prove their loyalties and gain in return some positions of importance.

In addition to the members of her own party who have been trained to become alien to all norms of democratic functioning, Gandhi has successfully transformed various other constitutional elements in the same direction. The position of Governors in the states who are expected to exercise a constitutionally limited role, has been made into a position of an active agent of the Cong(I) in the states. That the Governors are active in destabilizing the non-Cong(I) state governments today is an important consequence of the political methods employed by the Prime Minister.

In addition to the changes that have been firmly established within the affairs of her own party, Gandhi has also achieved new heights in how the electoral political process is to be carried through. The phenomenon of defections of elected legislators from one party to another has become a common feature of the Gandhi rule. Recently, the Cong(I) has resorted to openly buying the legis-

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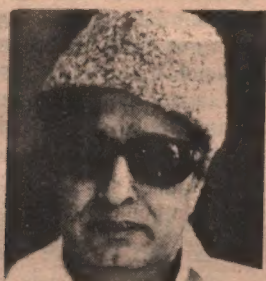
NATIONAL SCENE

Tamil Nadu Govt Opens Opposition Mail

A furore erupted in the Rajya Sabha recently when Vai Gopalsamy of DMK flourished a Tamil Nadu government order authorizing the police to open his mail. He said: "It is a most obnoxious order. I am not a proclaimed offender or criminal. I am an elected representative of the people and MGR has unleashed his notorious police not only on me but on all my leaders to gather information about our party affairs. In this devious way he is trying to get not only our party but all those whom his government doesn't like for their independent views."

Tirunelveli district, directing them to look into all of Gopalsamy's mail for six months. The order, issued under the Indian Post Office Act of 1898 said that the mail "shall be intercepted and detained and delivered to the superintendent of police, Special Branch, CID, madras, or any person deputed by the said superintendent in this behalf."

Gopalsamy is not the only DMK leader whose mail is being intercepted. According to intelligence sources, the state government has issued about 70 orders



MGR



Gopalsamy

Interception of Gopalsamy's mail began on July 21 last year when the chief secretary wrote a confidential letter to the superintendent of police, Special Branch, CID, Madras, and the postmaster,

containing the names of over 200 people including that of M.Karunanidhi, six of the 17 district party presidents and a dozen youth leaders.

(from Prabhu Chawla in India Today)

CPI Continues Anti-Indira Posture

CPI will not change its line of opposing the domestic policies of Indira Gandhi's government, despite the Soviet Communist Party Politburo's statement in its support, said CPI's General Secretary C.Rajeswara Rao at New Delhi on January 11. He was speaking at the end of a three-day meeting of the party's executive committee.

The document adopted by the committee set before the party the task of organizing 10 mass campaigns against Congress(I) attempts to topple non-Cong(I) governments, for more powers and resources to the states, against wrong political and economic policies of the Congress(I), and against Cong(I)'s invidious attempts to distort the history of freedom struggle. The tasks also included organizing campaigns against communal and disruptive forces, against rising prices and for remunerative prices to farmers.

The document also said CPI, in cooperation with other left parties, was trying to draw various opposition parties away from the pro-imperialist reactionary BJP, which "could only ensnare Lok Dal in its unholy national democratic alliance."

MORE INDEPENDENT?

According to H.K.Dua, writing in the Indian Express, CPI insiders give interesting details of how Rajeswara Rao has drifted away from Moscow. He did not go to Moscow to attend Brezhnev's funeral. Interestingly, he avoided meeting Bulgaria's President Todor Zhivkov who visited Delhi in December. Rao initially accepted an invitation to meet Zhivkov but later an aide called the Bulgarian embassy saying Rao was not well and could he send M.Farooqi, a secretariat member instead.

Rifts in Maharashtra Congress(I)

Nearly 40 Congress legislators in Maharashtra who are supporters of former Chief Minister Babasaheb Bhosale and call themselves the "third force" have denounced the present Chief Minister Vasant Rao Patil for paralysis of the government there. The MLAs decided to meet party president Indira Gandhi and submit a memorandum against Patil. Gandhi reportedly assured them that she would look into the charges leveled by them against Patil.

The Bulgarian ambassador went to Farooqi and reportedly told him that Zhivkov was the general secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party and Rao not meeting him amounted to an affront.

Rao is not keeping good health, suffering from asthma, but some CPI people think he did not meet Zhivkov because he did not want to be told by the leader of another country to stop opposing Congress(I).

A different view is that while Moscow does continue to support Indira Gandhi and even sent a party delegation to the plenary session of Congress(I) in Calcutta, it is not too upset at CPI's opposition to Gandhi. Gandhi herself is not believed to regard CPM and CPI as serious threats to her power and may not view their non-opposition as crucial. Moscow may also want maneuvering room.

Election Commission Criticized for Echoing Ruling Party

Two recent reports of the Election Commission have been criticized by the Opposition for being biased towards the ruling party.

In one, the Commission recommended that President's rule be imposed a month before a state is to have elections in order to prevent the misuse of official machinery by the ruling party. Opposition parties have pointed out that since President's rule really means rule by the central government, it would only benefit Congress(I) in the present circumstances. They suggest instead that state governments function strictly as caretaker governments during the period before elections and not do things like announce new projects, tax concessions, etc.

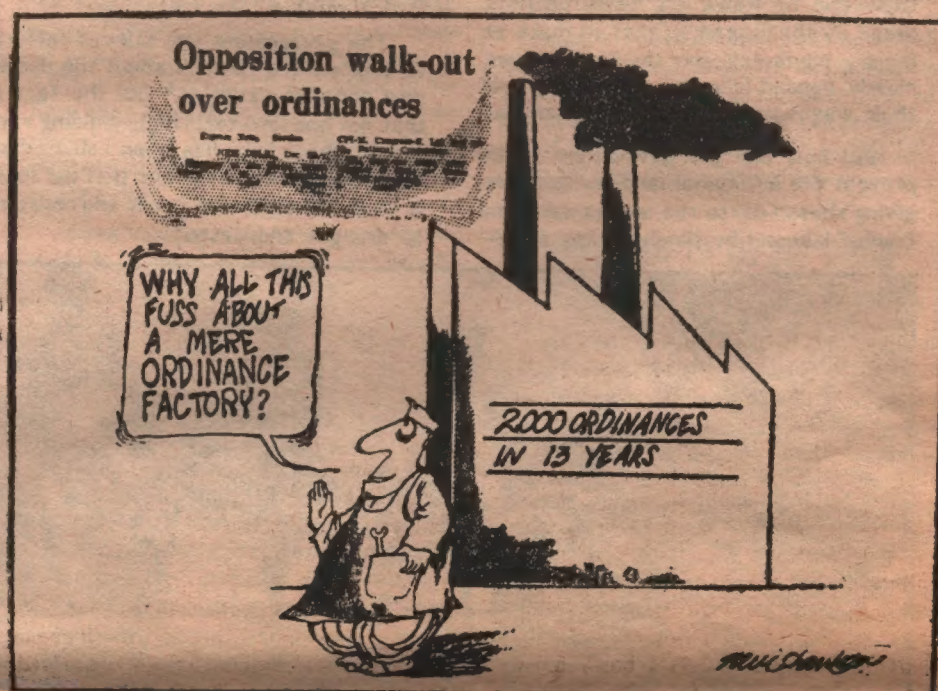
In a second report, the Commission has made a number of observations critical of the Jammu and Kashmir government during the elections in June. J&K's Law Minister P.L.Handoo has charged that the Commission was repeating Congress(I)'s charges with no verification or without waiting for the courts to rule on them. Handoo also commented that the Election Commission had better start with the coming Parliament elections in so far as its recommendation of imposing President's rule on the eve of elections.

Mrs. Gandhi and 1984

On Jan. 15, the same day the opposition meeting in Calcutta concluded announcing a charter of economic demands, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi warned in a nationwide television and radio broadcast that India's security was threatened as never before and appealed for help in shouldering the growing burden of defense. Gandhi also said that she wanted the forthcoming 7th five year plan to alter the basic pattern of growth to progressively reduce social and economic equality. Gandhi did not mention the issue of next elections which are scheduled to be held in January next year but many opposition leaders and political commentators have been speculating that they might happen sooner.

Gandhi has recently made national integrity and security from outside and inside as the key issue; she has been clamoring that Pakistan is to invade soon. At the Congress(I) national convention in

Calcutta, this was the main theme of Gandhi's speech. In 1971, it was the slogan of Garibi Hatao that she used to win the elections. In 1980, the law and order situation and stability were made the focus. Since she can neither claim to have contributed towards Garibi Hatao, nor towards maintaining law and order and stability, in 1984, she has resorted to the rhetoric of danger to India from outside and inside. The 20 point program has been revived also, with commercial banks in New Delhi organizing a large public meeting at the Ramila Medan on Jan. 4 to project Rajiv Gandhi as the savior of the poor with "a mass loaning function to assist the rehabilitation of the weaker sections under the 20-Point Program of our beloved Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi. For the command performance, the banks had approved in advance as many as 41,000 loan applications for a total amount of Rs 160 million. Sycophancy Indira Style !!!!



The Election Jigsaw:

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she concludes that the results from the efforts of this school have neither been helpful in understanding elections as part of the political process nor have they provided a predictive basis for clarifying the direction of political change. Such analytical disarray was most evident during the period the Emergency and immediately thereafter. Unfortunately, when Kaushik tries to provide an alternative in terms of political economy, it comes out as a rather elementary and limp version of economic determinism.

In the section on the results of elections, Kaushik's study is helpful in demonstrating the connections between caste and class and the voting pattern for all major political parties in India. The more affluent and upper castes tend to receive the support of their own communities and are successful in mobilizing the votes of a significant proportion of the electorate of other communities (a section of the poor and middle ranks in the caste/class hierarchy). The success of the Congress, BJP, Janata and the Communist parties rests on combinations of this pattern.

The breakdown of the politics of consensus, particularly related to the Congress party, is not very clearly explained even though the investigation attempts to link the role of the rising "middle" castes in the countryside with a partial consolidation of the bourgeois ranks in the urban areas. Perhaps what remains necessary is a clear presentation of the basis and strength of the rural and urban bourgeois forces, the particulars of their ideological mobilization and the restructuring underway in contemporary India at

the political level. Through such an approach not only the role of the "middle" castes and class would be highlighted but the growing significance of the vast numbers of the unorganized workers and peasants along with women and youth will become relevant. Analyses of these forces can provide fresh insight into the period that led up to the Emergency (for example, the peasant, worker, student and police movements of 1973-74) as well as the realignment and restructuring that is taking place since the end of the Emergency.

The key to post-Emergency politics appears to be a weakening consensus accompanied by an intensifying use of force. The fragility and instability of the political process in the post-Emergency period is exemplified by the period of Janata rule and the contemporary administration of Congress(I). In both cases the alliance of differing social factions is too contradictory to remain in sustained unity in the face of growing economic (unemployment, inflation), social (caste, class) and political (Punjab, Assam) dislocations.

Can the opposition make a comeback? In the concluding chapter on the left parties and elections, Kaushik shows the essentially elitist nature of leftist (CPI & CPM) electoral politics. This pattern of political conduct is an important reason for the continued marginalization of these parties in the Indian political process. While such criticism could provide the initiation of alternative insights, Kaushik fails to develop a case for the means by which the political forces on the left can utilize the electoral process to the ends of social transformation.

MP Bans Khesari Dal as Wages

N.K. SINGH

The Madhya Pradesh government has admitted, at long last, that the toxic khesari dal, which causes an incurable form of paralysis that disables its victims for life, is given to farm laborers as wages in the state.

In December, the state government announced a ban on payment of wages in the form of khesari dal to farm laborers to prevent its use. Last year Parliament had been told that "the Madhya Pradesh government had not received any complaint that the laborers were being paid in khesari dal."

What forced the government to change its stand was a writ in the Supreme Court charging that "in a fairly large number of villages of the Vindhya region payments (to bonded laborers and farmworkers) are made in terms of a toxic pulse, khesari."

The government denied the charge but the lie was nailed when the Assistant Collectors of Rewa and Satna districts, asked by the Supreme Court to make an inquiry, confirmed that the farmworkers, mainly bonded laborers, were being paid their wages in the form of khesari dal.

But how can the government really prevent the influential land-owners from giving khesari dal to the unorganized and bonded laborers by simply issuing a noti-

fication? According to a survey by a New Delhi fortnightly, even ministers of the Madhya Pradesh government are not paying the prescribed minimum wages to their farm laborers.

Farmers grow khesari dal because it is an insurance against vagaries of nature. The sturdy crop can grow in almost infertile land without any care. Drought, flood, hailstorm and pests cause little damage to it. Its roti and dal both taste good.

Mass outbreaks of lathyrism, the paralytic disease, have followed years of famine and scarcity conditions, when khesari dal constituted the staple diet of the rural poor.

In 1961, the central government banned the sale and distribution of khesari dal and its use as adulterant. But Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, which produce more than 80% of the country's khesari dal, have refused to ban the sale of the toxic pulse.

The government also talks of "efforts to educate the farmers about the use of new nontoxic varieties," but the fact is that not one low-toxin high-yielding variety of khesari dal has been released so far. [There is also evidence that the toxin is what makes khesari dal hardy and resistant to drought and pests.]



A young man holds his diseased leg out for inspection. —India Today

Code to Promote Breastfeeding

The government has adopted a national code to protect and promote breastfeeding following its universal acceptance as the natural and ideal way of feeding for healthy child development.

"The government affirms the nation's responsibility to promote breastfeeding in the country and also to protect pregnant women and lactating mothers from any influence that disrupts it, especially because inappropriate feeding practices and promotion of breast-milk substitutes constitute a health hazard for young children," the notification says.

FORMULA ADS BANNED

The same code also bans the advertising of formulas and the distribution of free samples of formulas. It specifies that information and educational materials on feeding infants should not contain any picture or text that may idealize the use of formulas.

There should be no point-of-sale advertising or other promotional devices like special counters, displays, discount coupons, premiums, etc.

Kondapalli Seetharamaiah

(continued from page 1)

jumped bail. He was rearrested in January 1981 as he tried to board a train at Begumpet. Towards the end of the Emergency, before his first arrest, he founded the People's War Group, which began its activities in the Karimnagar district of Andhra Pradesh. The group believes in militant action, using violence if necessary, and boycotts all elections. India Today estimates that the majority of some 3,000 Naxalites in Andhra belong to the People's War Group.

The area of their activity being near the border with Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, there have also been reports of the group extending its operations into the adjoining districts of those two states. In all three states, the group has focused its work on tribals and poor peasants.

CPM Behind Slayings

(continued from page 1)

out and killed him. Five more persons were pulled out and killed mercilessly one after another.

Sarkar said one of his party comrades who had just arrived at Calcutta from Nadia said that all the bodies, except that of Chowdhury, were beyond recognition. Faces were smashed and bodies hacked to pieces. The floor inside the meeting room turned into a pool of blood. There was more of it outside, where limbs and pieces of flesh were strewn all over.

Sarkar said that even a prominent CPM leader of Shantipur, Ajit Saha, thought that Chakravorty might be behind the murders. Sarkar said relations between his party and CPM were cordial nowhere in the state and it was CPM that always provoked a row.

Local police have so far arrested 13 persons, all belonging to CPM.

200,000 Jute Workers Strike for Higher Wages

Over 200,000 jute workers started an indefinite strike on Jan 16 in Calcutta demanding higher wages. Another demand of strikers is the nationalization of all private jute mills in order to streamline jute production. According to the president of Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Union, Niren Ghosh, workers in seven mills in Andhra would also join the strike.

SC Orders Protection for Harijans in Bihar

The Supreme Court on Jan. 11 directed the state of Bihar to provide protection to 15 Harijan families in Bapu Bika village in Biharsharif, where Harijan women were massraped and families looted last June.

Justices PN Bhagwati and DP Madon directed the state government to insure that the victims were not summoned to the district headquarters in Biharsharif, but that instead police should visit the village to record statements.

The court asked the state government to file an affidavit stating what action had been taken by a deputy superintendent of police to whom the complaint had been made and why he had failed to take prompt action.

The order was given on a petition by Jose Kannanaika, director of Program for the Scheduled Castes, alleging that police had not taken any action against the culprits.

Window Dressing Inc. (continued from page 2)

the movement has accustomed the people of Assam can hardly be termed democratic. All dissent is ruthlessly weeded out. All criticism is either silenced or subjected to venomous character-assassination. There are certain obvious lacunae in the program and propaganda of the movement, e.g., the problem of immigrant Muslims, many hundreds of thousands of whom will remain in the state even when all suspected "Bangladeshis" have been rounded up and driven out. But anyone trying to point out the problem or demand an honest discussion on it is likely to be subjected to intense pressure. It may well be that the Center has compelled the adoption of this military discipline. But there is some evidence that it has been modeled on the discipline of reactionary militant organizations. An interesting news-item these days has been the revelation that the RSS General Secretary has come to Assam with a month-long itinerary just when AASU had convened a meeting of supporters of the Assam movement of Jorhat. One is made uneasy by the feeling that the RSS is trying to establish the same type of vote-bank for the BJP among the Assamese as the Congress(I) has built up among the minorities.

SAIKIA'S GOVT'S PLAN

The present Assam government is well aware of the threat to its survival from a revival of the movement. The police have been strengthened all over the state. More and more regions have been declared disturbed areas. Even in Gauhati, except the Congress(I), that too only when backed by dense security, few parties have been allowed to hold public meetings to ventilate their views. In places that witnessed violence during the last election, the police have unleashed a reign of terror, impartially thrashing the guilty and the innocent alike, and insulting and brutally assaulting even elderly villagers. The attempts on Saikia's life has its mysteries. But it was in part an attempt to settle scores for that reign of terror.

ATTEMPT ON SAIKIA'S LIFE

At the risk of incurring the displeasure of the embattled press corps, I should like to plead that the line of the present Assam government need not be swallowed hook, line and sinker. There is a large penumbra all around the lighted area in the reports on most of the sensational events. We ought to take a hard look at that shadowy region. After all there is

Floods in Tamil Nadu Kill Over 50

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MG Ramachandran said on Dec. 30 that the damage due to the rains in the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu was nearly Rs 800 million. The death toll due to the floods has been put to 63. Over 11,000 head of cattle have perished. Over 200,000 huts have demolished. The worst affected district was Thanjavur, where over 770,000 people had to be evacuated.

Calcutta Metro

The General Manager of the Metro Railway in Calcutta, KN Das Gupta, announced that the Calcutta Metro railway will be operative by the end of January. According to Das Gupta, the stretch between Park Street and Rabindra Sadan would have regular service by the end of January and the stretch from Esplanade and Bhowanipur would be in service by the end of this year.

The Calcutta Metro is the first metro railway in the country. Das Gupta also said that 42% of the work of the total metro system was already completed. The construction on the metro has been underway for over 10 years. The total cost for constructing the system is now expected to around Rs 5.6 billion.

still some sense in the state saying that truth is the first casualty in a war and in Assam, we are witnessing a major conflict.

Consider the attempt on Hiteswar Saikia's life. One is thankful that the hot-headed youth could not injure Saikia seriously. But there is at least one chance in hundred that the incident had been deftly engineered to refurbish Saikia's image which had been badly tarnished by the spate of bomb-blasts in and around Gauhati during the PM's visit.

SOCALLED SURRENDER

The reported surrender of the extremists is yet another case in point. The names-Babul Neog et al- are familiar from a 1981 Sunday (magazine) report, complete with their wanted photographs. But the confession or statements by the penitent terrorists reads uncannily like a press statement by Saikia or by some high government official. The statement duly trots out the line that the extremists have now realized that violence does not pay and the leadership of the movement has failed. It fits too well.

There is further that mysterious death and resurrection of Rafiqul Hussain at Hajo, an hour's journey by bus from Gauhati, with 30% of its population Muslim and close to the scene of a brutal bomb blast that had in 1982 killed 24 people on the spot. A student of Class X, Rafiqul was lost without a trace, generating great tension in the area. Then a body of a boy of the same age came floating down the river, too horribly disfigured to be identified. Rafiqul's parents were reluctant to claim the body, but were apparently persuaded to accept it as if that of their lost son. But some time back, Rafiqul was found very much alive in a nearby village. His story is that he had been picked up by the CRP and left at a spot far from home. One does not know what happened to the hapless youths whom the police had arrested on the basis of irrefutable evidence as the main culprits in the crime of murder that never really took place. It would be a pretty mess if they had already signed confessions pleading guilty of the crime.

These events and non-events ought at least warn us against accepting in toto the bright and flashy pictures of normalcy that sections of the media are projecting. If the leaders of the movement are not guileless mama's boys, the government too is quite capable of playing some dirty tricks.

(from FRONTIER)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India and Pakistan Sign Agreements of Cooperation

Indian and Pakistani governments agreed for cooperation in the field of culture, travel, information and sports and education on Jan. 19. These agreements were reached at a meeting of the sub-commissions of the Indo-Pakistan Joint Commission which concluded three day deliberations. It was agreed to issue double-entry transit visas to visitors from either country to promote group tourism. It was also agreed that the two countries will exchange visits of artists, poets, writers, besides opening more shrines for pilgrims of both countries.

The meeting of the subcommission on trade could not however break the 5 year old deadlock over a new trade agreement.

ZIA AT JAN. 26 FUNCTION

In another development, Pakistan's President Zia-ul Haq attended a recep-

tion on Jan. 26, India's Republic Day, hosted by the Indian Ambassador KD Sharma. In his conversations with the Indian Ambassador, Zia reportedly expressed satisfaction with the progress made at the recent meetings of the four sub-commissions of the Indo-Pakistani Joint Commission. Sharma reportedly told Zia that sometimes remarks of Indian leaders were misunderstood in Pakistan and given an exaggerated play than tended to carry unnecessary tension into the atmosphere.

PAK MINISTER TO VISIT

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Sahebzada Yaqub Khan was also present at the reception and reportedly said that he was looking forward to visiting India again in June.

Kuldip Nayar's Pakistan Visit

Kuldip Nayar reported after a visit to Pakistan recently that he found fear in the minds of Pakistanis that India might invade Pakistan. According to Nayar, Pakistanis argued that Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi might begin the hostilities to "improve" her prospects in general elections or that she might help secessionists in Sind to break away from Pakistan as she did in Bangladesh during 1971.

Nayar felt very disturbed at what he observed in Pakistan. According to him, there was no hostility to India. On the contrary, he found that "the people are so effusive and friendly that one cannot but be touched by their warmth." According to Nayar, the three big cities, Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad, that he visited during 8 days, were devoid of any war hysteria or atmosphere that would have been there if Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's warning about the possibility of Pakistan's attack on India were to be believed.

"CIA-Aided" Institute Told to Wind up in Ahmedabad

The Asia-America Free Labor Institute, allegedly funded by the CIA, has wound up its activities in Ahmedabad, following instructions from the Union Home Ministry.

The AAFLI came into being during the Vietnam war and its first regional office became operational in Saigon in 1968. AAFLI shared the USAID office in Bangladesh and served certain regional interests of the CIA, according to Don Thomson and Rodney Larson, authors of "Where were you brother?".

In Ahmedabad, AAFLI's office was housed in the Textile Labor Association premises.



Namedia is Beautiful

IQBAL MALIK

The last paragraph of Namedia's Commission II report says that "Namedia should work in a nongovernmental framework." But, as the Delhi conference of the Non-Aligned Media was primarily in a governmental framework, how does it expect to provide a lead? At least three of the delegates from India were government representatives, and another was a Congress(I) MP. The largest foreign contingent was from Cuba, numbering nine, and they could not all have been nongovernmental.

The Namedia exhortation to rise above parochialism itself becomes parochial when it says, "It is only appropriate that media men and women from non-aligned countries rise above parochial loyalties." Does it imply that all media men and women in the West are tainted with capitalism, transnationalism and exploitations and as such beyond redemption? What about media personnel in some other countries with commissars at their elbow?

That brings one to the crucial point—firm control of the media in a majority of the non-aligned countries, including India, though they are vociferous exponents

of free and balanced communication outwardly, not inwardly. Within their own states they practice denial of what they preach abroad. The press in India, because it is free, has been lambasted enough, among others, by the Prime Minister and the honorable MP from Amethi. But radio and television are in the front pocket of the central ruling party. According to a "media availability" chart of Namedia, radio sets in India, per hundred persons, are in the ratio of 3.22; dailies, 2.37; and TV sets, 0.16. Obviously the government of India itself is the biggest kulak in dissemination of information. Since that is so, surely it has to tell itself, and not others, to ensure free and balanced communication?

The MacBride Report published back in 1980 is now very much quoted as the existing definitive study of communication. The MacBride team had an Indian representative who a year earlier (1978) had chaired a Working Group, which recommended the autonomy of Akashvani and Doordarshan through an Act of Parliament. The Janata government did not dare go far enough and the Congress(I) government put the report on the shelf.

(excerpted from the Indian Express)

Indian Journalist in Nicaragua

Sudip Mazumdar, a correspondent for the Indian Express, recently visited Nicaragua for a week. He is the first Indian journalist to visit the disturbed Nicaragua-Honduran border, from where anti-Sandinista forces launch attacks into Nicaragua. On his return, the Indian Express carried a three-part account of his trip. Some excerpts follow.

MANAGUA

"Outside the small airline terminal building, the ocean breeze is warm and humid. Faces, many resembling Indian complexion and structure, are friendly. All conversation veers towards revolution and war.

"Managua, the capital city of about 500,000 people, is guarded by the army and the people's militia. All over the city posters, banners and wall paintings exhort the people to remain alert against 'American imperialists and their lackeys'. ... Nicaraguans hold their liberation from a dictatorial rule four years ago very dearly. They are ready to sacrifice anything to protect the revolution. Yet there is no sign of belligerence in their attitude. From the top revolutionary leader to the humble peasant, everybody seems to have the message for the Americans, 'Leave us alone. Let us shape our own destiny'.

"In four years, the Sandinistas made remarkable progress in three key areas—land reform, education and health. There were about 200,000 landless peasants before the revolution. More than 500,000 hectares of land were distributed among them. A program launched in 1980 reduced basic illiteracy from 50% to 12%. School enrolment has doubled since the revolution. Infant mortality was another big problem. The health care program brought down the number of children who die before the age of six from 122 deaths per 1000 to 88."

AT THE BORDER

"The fear of attack haunts Nicaraguans living in the mountainous region bordering Honduras, where between 7,000 and 10,000 counterrevolutionaries (called contras) are preparing for a major attack on Nicaragua. The Honduran-

lieutenant. Mother of two, she joined the guerrillas in 1976, working as an underground contact.

"We sat in the canteen of the military post. As she talked about the Contra activities, young soldiers came up to her with problems. Auxiliadora dealt with each soldier with a smile and an affectionate address—companionero.

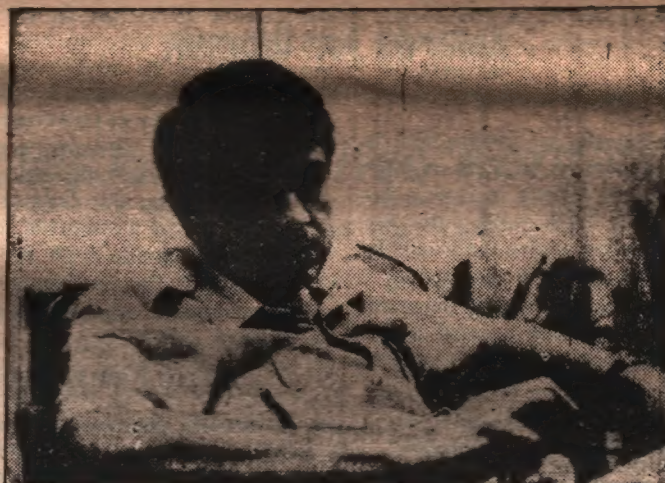
"Living under such tension has however not affected the friendliness of the Nicaraguans. In San Fernando village, an entire vanload of people, on their way to Jalapa market, got down to pose before my camera.

"In Santa Clara village, children were picking beans. Adilio Rumuga, a 17-year-old boy was coordinating the operations by his friends, all younger to him. Before they go to school, the children work in the field, a cooperative farm. They earn 30 cordobas (about Rs 10) a day.

SERGIO RAMIREZ

"One June afternoon in 1959, the army of dictator Somoza opened fire on a peaceful demonstration at the university in Leon. Among the crowd was a 17-year-old boy who saw four of his friends falling dead and 80 others lying injured. From that day the boy hated Somoza and decided to fight against his rule. Today Sergio Ramirez, 40, is one of the three members of Nicaragua's ruling junta. He is also one of Nicaragua's best-known novelists. He answered questions on Nicaragua's concerns in an interview with the Indian Express.

Ramirez: We want the US to leave Central America in peace. We also want the US to leave Nicaragua alone. There cannot be peace in Central America as long as the US keeps supporting the counterrevolutionaries operating from Honduras and Costa Rica. We have put forward concrete proposals for negotiations. We have said that Nicaragua would not be allowed to become a military base for any superpower. We have said that if the US withdraws all its forces from Central America, Nicaragua will also ask the Cubans to leave. We are ready to sign a peace and security treaty with the US.



Sergio Ramirez

based Nicaraguan Democratic Force, financed with an estimated \$33 million from the CIA, is now working on a plan to seize some parts of Nicaragua and set up a 'provisional government' and seek international help, according to sources in Washington and Managua. In the village of Teotecacinte, the Sandinistas and the Contras are locked in eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation. Village militia, consisting of able-bodied men, women and children, cooperate with the army to defend their country. Army commanders at the village were concerned about the joint US-Honduran military exercises just off the coast of Nicaragua. They considered the exercises as dress rehearsals for a fullscale invasion. They were aware of the positioning of the American 28th amphibious unit, including marines and a helicopter squadron, in Honduras.

"The road from Managua to the northern region is the Pan-American Highway. I had to stop at several military command posts on the way to get clearance to go farther ahead. At one such command post at Matagalpa, I met Auxiliadora Bravo, a 28-year-old sub-

The US has not responded to any of these proposals. They just want to destroy us.

ENS: Both private enterprise and cooperative ventures are working here side by side.

Ramirez: We have a mixed economy here. Our relation with the bourgeoisie is good. We don't want to nationalize any more. Our capitalists had not made major investments in key sectors. So the state has to do this now.

ENS: Nicaragua, a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, has been accused by some of being pro-Soviet.

Ramirez: Because we are anti-American it gives an impression of us being pro-Soviet. We try to take help from everybody. We use Soviet weapons and we also have Belgian and NATO weapons. And they are good. India being a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement can help us greatly. We value our friendship with India and we want to strengthen it. We are going to open an embassy in New Delhi shortly.

Criticism of New Rape Law

The recently passed amendment to the Rape Law has been criticized by a number of women's organizations as being inadequate. An article by Kalpana Sharma in the Indian Express provides a background and details some of the criticisms.

The impetus for amending the existing law came from the Mathura case in which the Supreme Court reversed the conviction of two policemen of raping a 16-year-old tribal girl, Mathura. The justices said there was no proof that she had actively resisted the rape and because there was proof that she was not a virgin. The ensuing furore led to attempts to amend the existing law as well as recommendations by the Law Commission.

Sharma says the two positive points about the amendment are that the definition of "consent" has been changed and that "custodial rape" has been specifically defined.

Under the amendment, a man is said to commit rape under seven descriptions. These include if the woman is forced to submit to sexual intercourse "without her free and voluntary consent," through deception, through unsoundness of mind, or intoxication so that the woman has not understood the nature and consequences of that to which she gives consent, or is unable to offer effective resistance. It also includes consent obtained by "putting her in fear of death or hurt or of any injury or by criminal intimidation as defined in Section 503." This provision covers threats of death or injury to a third party, which would force the woman to submit to a man.

Custodial rape has been defined to make it clear that it applies to police officials who have a woman in custody, hospital custodians, superintendents of rescue homes, and others in similar positions. Also, the burden of proof has been shifted to the accused. If a woman charges that she has been raped, it will be up to the accused to prove his innocence.

The punishment for custodial rape is ten years imprisonment, as opposed to 7 years for other rapes.

WHAT IS MISSING?

Indira Jaisingh of the Lawyers Collective feels strongly that an important omission is the Law Commission recommendation for a mandatory medical examination or both the victim and the accused.

Another recommendation of the Law Commission was that police be required to record a rape case if such a complaint is made. If they fail to do so, and the woman complains of this failure, the strongest possible action should be taken. Jaisingh points out that in innumerable rape cases, the policemen on duty refuse to record the complaints and often subject the victim to harassment.

The Law Commission also suggested that the relatives of the victim or a representative of a women's group or a social welfare group be allowed to be present when the victim's testimony is being recorded by the police. The woman would also not be required to go to a police station to record her complaint.

Another amendment, which some women MPs like Geeta Mukherjee of CPI had tried to include in the law, concerned extending the meaning of custodial rape to "power rape" or economic rape. They had pointed out that rape was committed most often on poor women - Adivasis or landless agricultural laborers - by landlords, forest contractors or others who had a direct economic hold over them. Custodial rape only covered those in government or public institutions and not private ones.

Finally, the Law Commission and others pointed out that the provision of a minimum punishment (7 or 10 years under the amendment) is actually counterproductive since it will lead to judges acquitting many rapists when they feel the minimum punishment would be too severe.

Women's Role In Food-Processing

A project sponsored by the Indian Council for Social Science Research under an Indo-Dutch program deals with the development of food processing industry with special reference to a few select industries - spices, pickles, papads and fish-processing, and its impact on women's role and status. The study, conducted by Dr Neera Desai, found an unequal growth even among the four selected industries. Fish-processing, which is largely geared to export needs, is modernized in terms of equipment and structures; pickles and spices fall into the category of traditionally organized industry, while ground spices fall in between. The study examines the relationship between the variation in organizational structure of the industry and women's work participation. Here are some of the findings:

1. Establishments in all four industries display the characteristic features of the unorganized sector.
2. Greater commercialization has led to changes in women's employment rather than mechanization of industry.
3. Introduction of even limited mechanization has not changed women's work as they are not given use of tools and machinery. Traditional sex segregation exists, except in Mahila Mandals where women perform all the work.
4. In both traditional and modern sectors, women's work is strikingly similar - it is an extension of household skills and require little formal education and training.
5. Fragmentation of the production processes and hiring of women as casual labor facilitate cost reduction and circumvention of labor laws.

SNDT Taking Science & Tech to Rural Women

The SNDT Women's University, Bombay, organized a training program for women to utilize available skills and resources. The program aimed at development of their own kitchen gardens and increasing the marketability of the products through cooperatives.

Sixty-five women from lower castes and classes received training at Kikerla village in fruit and vegetable preservation through modern canning processes, and in preparing weaning foods for infants from local materials to be supplied as nutritive supplements to local Balwadis, Poshak Ahar Kendras at taluka level.

A group of five women and two men visited a farmer's fair at Chikli to learn about modern methods of farming and use of improved tools. Further training is envisaged in each village to small and marginal farmers through field research assistants who will demonstrate compost making and run a model farm. Improved tools will be introduced in clay mixing for pottery to reduce the drudgery of women who are at present doing this work by stamping on clay.

Women's Studies Proposed

The Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi, under Dr Vina Mazumdar, organized a two-day workshop on the preparation of project proposals for developing a program of institutional collaboration under a new UGC scheme of Women's Studies. The proposed program envisages identification, abstraction, selection of historical writings on women that discuss ideas on women's ideology, and later bring out translations and reprints. Several Delhi colleges, Karnataka University, Jadavpur University, SNDT Women's University and a women's college in Madurai were represented.

Awards for Women

VASVIK AWARD

Dr Usha M Joshi, deputy director, Institute for Research in Reproduction, Bombay, won the Vasvik Industrial Research award for 1983. Joshi is the first woman scientist to receive the award for her outstanding work in developing a low-cost simple test for early detection of pregnancy, which can be used in district hospitals and primary health centers.

BAJAJ AWARD FOR UPLIFTMENT OF WOMEN

Pushaben Mehta of Ahmedabad has been chosen for the Jankidevi Bajaj Award for 1983 for outstanding contribution to the welfare and upliftment of women and children. This award carried a

citation, a medal and a cash prize of Rs 100,000. Mehta was a pioneer in the campaign against atrocities against women and social customs like dowry. As a result of her efforts, the Gujarat government appointed the Committee for the Eradication of Suicide with her as its first chair. She is also the founder of a chain of rescue homes (vikas griha) for women in Gujarat.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION AWARD

Pramila Dandavate, Janata MP and ardent champion of women's rights, has been presented the Women's Liberation Award for 1983, instituted by the Sardar Kirad Shashtabadi Trust. Dandavate has taken up many issues - dowry, employment of women, pornography in the cinema, molestation in streets.

First Court-Based Marriage Counseling Cell

India's first and only court-based marriage counseling cell has found that interference by family members is the most frequent and important ground for marital discord, contributing to 40% of the complaints.

The cell, established by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in June 1980, and functioning at Bombay's Civil and Sessions Court, has so far counseled 215 cases referred to it by three city matrimonial courts. The cases pertained to the restoration of conjugal rights, judicial separation, divorce, maintenance and child custody.

Other reasons for discord were mental and physical cruelty, mental illness and retardation, epilepsy, adulterous behavior, alcoholism, sexual incompatibility and sterility.

The report, jointly submitted by Bageshwari Parikh and Pratibha Gheewalla, the cell's counselors, says, "In most cases, it was seen that either the husband's parents or the wife's parents had not only created problems but also added fuel to the fire by instigating one spouse against the other." Most families consider court cases to be a prestige issue and the family members come in the way of reconciliation till their ego is satisfied.



Woman Tortured in Hyderabad Police station

Despite instructions to Hyderabad police after the Ramiza Bee episode of 1981 that a woman or a girl should not be taken to the police station after dusk, a young married woman was taken from her residence with two of her male family members to a Hyderabad police station late at night on December 8, allegedly beaten up, abused and released next morning. Sofia Begum, 21, the victim, was allegedly taken to Santosh Nagar police station by Sub-Inspector Jawal and some constables from their residence in Riyasat Nagar.

According to Sofia Begum, she was beaten up with lathies by the sub-inspector and other constables in the police station in front of her brother Syed Shahbuddin.

A police spokesperson said the woman and two others of her family were called to the police station in connection with a burglary in their own house, on Nov. 24. A gold chain, a tape recorder, wrist watches and other valuables had been stolen while the family was asleep. The spokesperson said Sofia Begum was suspected of having connived with a young man of the locality to commit the theft and escape.

Khatum Bee, Sofia's aged mother, said, with tears in her eyes, "I was told that the police would help us get back the stolen goods. In fact I pleaded with my son not to report the matter to the police. Now the police have tortured my children like this."

RURAL INDIA

Caste Wars and Mud Horses

T.N. GOPALAN

In 1983, the Special Additional Sessions Judge of Ramnad district in Tamil Nadu acquitted 86 persons charged with arson and looting, resulting in the death of five harijans, in the village of Chinna Unjanai in 1979.

A close look at what happened in Chinna Unjanai in 1979, and the subsequent decision to acquit the accused, lays bare the festering wound of casteism in the so-called progressive state of Tamil Nadu.

Chinna Unjanai is a small harijan hamlet in Devakottai taluka, a kilometer away from Periya Unjanai, which is predominantly populated by caste Hindus known as Nattars. [In Tamil, chinna means small and periya means big]. There is a temple in Chinna Unjanai dedicated to Ayyanar, a small-time deity in the Hindu pantheon. Terracotta horses are offered to this deity every year for the fulfilment of vows. This privilege was, of course, the birthright of caste Hindus; harijans were not allowed to come anywhere near the temple. However, in order that they could also be blessed by the deity, the harijans were permitted to clear the route of the mud horse procession of bushes and thorns.

In 1967, the Pallas of Chinna Unjanai staked their claim to offer mud horses to the deity. The Nattars decided to cancel the festival rather than have it defiled by the participation of the harijans.

And so it remained until 1979 when the Nattars suddenly decided to revive the festival and celebrate it as it had been celebrated before — without the participation of the harijans. On coming to know of this, the Pallas began to make arrangements for celebrating their own festival on the same day as the Nattars.

A disturbed administration invited both sections for talks in which it was decided that the Nattars would celebrate their festival on June 4 and 5 and the harijans on July 1. The Nattar festival was observed peacefully but before the harijans' turn came, two Nattars rushed to court and sought an injunction against the holding of the Pallas' festival — after all it was a Nattar temple and the harijans had no right to worship there.

On the dawn of June 28, 1979, hundreds of Nattars descended on Chinna Unjanai, armed with deadly weapons and systematically went about ransacking and setting fire to the Pallas' houses. As the attack was unexpected, the Pallas could not fight back and fled to safety. Five

Pallas were killed and more than 20 injured. As usual, the police arrived after everything was over.

Eighty-six persons were charged on as many as 15 counts — unlawful assembly, rioting, murder, dacoity, etc., but the judgement acquitted them of all the charges.

An argument used by the judge was that the greatest care should be exercised before believing the evidence of any witness of one faction against the accused of another faction. And so, the evidence of the prosecution witnesses was disbelieved. The accused were set free on three grounds: one, a caste Hindu tea shop was the first to be set on fire during the riot; secondly, while the witnesses said that the incident occurred at 6:30 AM, the first information report put it an hour earlier; three, the mud horses made by the Pallas for their festival were not destroyed by the marauders.

The special public prosecutor, upset about the verdict, said the prosecution evidence was overwhelming in many cases. He, however, squarely blamed the police for the fiasco. The investigating officer had been transferred out of the taluka immediately after the incident. He was not given permission to conduct the case despite repeated requests.

As for the harijans of Chinna Unjanai, the incident of 1979 is part of a long history of persecution. Said Karuppayi, a harijan woman in her 60s: "Earlier we were not permitted to wear cholis, not even a pallav on the upper part of our bodies. Even now, the situation has not changed much. My husband was beaten up badly when he fought for the right to wear a shirt. My son was killed because he was active in organizing the mud horse festival. Neither then nor now were the culprits punished."

It is against this background that the series of conversions of harijans to Islam in the state since two years ago must be viewed.

"The temple is ours, the village is ours; they will realize this if they try to upset the equation." This is the final word of the Nattars of Chinna Unjanai on the incident. But the Pallas of the village have moved beyond a passive acceptance of their fate. One of them said, after the judgement: "You presswallas did not even bother to publish the judgement. But you will all be here when we avenge the death of our brothers."

(from the Indian Express)

Supreme Court Orders Bonded Labor Release

In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court on December 17 directed the central government and the state government of Haryana to free and rehabilitate bonded laborers and ensure that minimum wages were paid to workers at stone quarries and stone crushers in Faridabad district and other parts of the state.

The court directed the Haryana government to formulate within three months a rehabilitation program for free bonded laborers who would be identified by the District Magistrates.

The judgements were passed after several hearings and the submission of commissioners' reports to the court on a writ petition filed by the Bandua Mukti Morcha. The morcha alleged that there were a large number of laborers from Maharashtra, MP, UP and Rajasthan who were working in the stone quarries under "inhuman and intolerable conditions" and that most of them were bonded.

A letter written to the court in February 1982 was treated as a writ petition. The court appointed two advocates, Ashok Srivastava and Ashok Panda, as commissioners to visit the quarries and find out whether the laborers were bonded. The two reported that the laborers interviewed were bonded and providing forced labor and that they did not even have "pure drinking water."

Later, the court appointed Dr Patwardhan of IIT-Delhi to carry out a socio-legal investigation and suggest how the workers' conditions could be improved.

In its judgement, the court said a major handicap in identifying bonded labor was "the reluctance of the administration to admit the existence of bonded labor, even where it was prevalent."

People's War Group in Maharashtra

[We print below excerpts from an article by Coomi Kapoor in India Today dated January 15, 1984.]

For two months now, 180 members of the Special Reserve Police have been combing the thick bamboo and teak jungles of Gadchiroli, at the eastern end of Maharashtra. They are in search of small bands of Naxalites, which since the monsoons have significantly increased their activities — and influence — in the region. Gradually over the past two years, Naxalites have filtered over the border from Andhra Pradesh. They owe their loyalty to Kondapalli Seetharamaiah.

While the authorities have had no success so far in the massive man-hunt — an SRP man admitted that "the villagers never inform us even if they know where they are" — the fame and popularity of the Naxalite groups are increasing in this backward Adivasi belt.

Living out in the open, the Naxalites move from village to village and hold meetings to lecture the local population on their rights and to assure the tribals of protection from any government servant who tries to take advantage of them.

LOCAL POPULARITY

Children in the villages have even begun to sing songs — in Telugu and Marathi — taught by the Naxalites. Says Raje Gowde, a schoolgirl from Arewade village: "I know they are carrying guns but they are helping local people a lot."

A schoolteacher of the Ettapally region adds that the harassment of the Adivasis and the demand for petty bribes has decreased drastically with the arrival of the Naxalites. "No forest officer dares to ask for chicken or liquor any more," he says, but adds: "It is like a spring action. The moment they leave the local government servants resort to their old ways. This is no long-term solution."

This year in Ettapally, the Naxalites played a crucial role in raising the rate for tendu leaf collection for bidis. When the contractors from the south insisted on paying at the old rate of Rs 6 a day, the villagers went on strike and everyone refused to pick. The Naxalites not only en-

couraged the Adivasis to hold out for their demands but assured them protection for cutting the wood required for their genuine fuel needs. Eventually, while some bidi contractors left the region, others agreed to increase the rate to Rs 11 per day. The rate for bamboo cutting has also shot up. Similar increase in rates took place earlier in the Sironcha zone.

Though the threat of violence is implicit in their talk and they move around heavily armed, even local authorities are willing to concede that the use of force by the groups in Maharashtra has been minimal. In Sironcha, the Naxalites cut off the arm of a teacher who had reportedly been a police informer and who had been warned earlier.

In Ettapally, two months back, the tehsildar was thrashed in front of the entire village of Jambia for having raped a village woman. The Naxalites first offered the man the alternative of touching the woman's feet and asking for her forgiveness. When he refused, they delivered a severe beating in public view.

ONE PARTICIPANT

While two keep guard and the bearded commander sits silently by, the softspoken deputy commander, Rajan, speaks of the hard life in the malaria-infested area. Like most of the group, he has been a college student. The rest are uneducated peasants. "We sleep in the open and get food from the villagers but till the people's war succeeds, we must continue our struggle," says Rajan. In addition to the barest necessities, their tiny haversacks contain a pile of literature on the movement in both English and Marathi.

While attitudes towards the Naxalites remain mixed among the non-Adivasis, most concede that even if unethical, their methods are still getting results. Said one: "We could not wipe out corruption in 10 years by addressing numerous letters to the collector and other authorities. The Naxalites have achieved better results in 10 months."

Chipko Reaches Karnataka

SUNDERLAL BAHUGUNA

Born in a small hill village of the UP Himalayas ten years ago, the Chipko movement has successfully focused national and even global attention on the fragile ecosystem of the Himalayas. It questioned development based on the ruthless butchery of nature to achieve short-term gains. It challenged the notion that forests mean timber by emphasizing their role in making soil, water and pure air, which are the basis of life.

The emergence of Chipko (Appiko) movement in Salkani village, of Sirsi Taluka, North Kanara District, Karnataka, on September 8 was a notable event.

Some 160 men and women, mostly youths, marched five miles to the forest, where the contractor's axemen under orders from the forest department were felling trees. The lead was given by Yuvak Mandal, an organization of the village youth. They hugged the trees marked for felling and compelled the laborers to stop the work.

News of Salkani spread like wildfire in the whole taluka and the adjoining taluka and Yuvak Mandalies started direct action in their respective areas. They immediately succeeded in stopping tree felling and driving away the axemen from six more forest coupes.

North Kanara district has a history of forest movements going back to the jungle satyagraha from 1930 to 1934 as a

part of the freedom struggle. Within 50 years, the forest area has been reduced from 80% to 26%. This was mainly due to the transfer of forest land to hydel projects and for other construction purposes. The remaining forests were exploited ruthlessly for commercial use, mainly to meet the growing demands of the plywood and pulp industries.

The Forest Department's policy of so-called scientific management of the forests aimed at clearfelling the natural forests to plant commercial species like eucalyptus and teak. At many places like Vakkal these species did not thrive. On the contrary the clearfelled areas were covered with weeds like eupatorium.

M.S.Hegde, a young farmer and activist of Wajgadde village, summarized the effects of deforestation as follows: The rains have become erratic. The rainy season, which lasted for six months, now is only for three months. Even small streams are flooded with the increased run-off and reduced infiltration. Drylands which depended on rains have become unfertile. Soil-erosion has accelerated. Fertile topsoil is washed away and it goes into the Arabian Sea. Due to eucalyptus and teak plantations, there is no fodder for the cattle.

An old farmer who dispenses herbal medicines for human and cattle ailments complained that herbs and wild fruit had become extinct.

(continued on page 9)

Calcutta Notebook

Timir Basu

Much to the dismay of the ruling cliques throughout the country, the world of Naxalites seems to be expanding despite intra-group rivalries. There were ups in the sixties, there were downs in the seventies. As for the current appraisal of the situation, the authorities still do not know how to go about it without admitting more reverses than gains. In most cases, they simply failed to anticipate anything about the development of the Naxalite movement. The news of massacre of seven Naxalites in a Nadia village has shocked the CPM as well for yet another reason of no less importance. What worries them most is the reappearance of the Naxalite phenomenon which they dubbed non-existent not very long ago. They were losing hold on villages as also towns to their political rivals as rapidly as they won them. If anything, the 1972 panorama may unfortunately repeat itself in its crudest form, not withstanding so much conclave culture. Blaming the Naxalites all the time cannot produce reassuring results. Nor can it pay dividends for long. It is bound to boomerang, it has not done already so despite CPM's well-known hobnobbing with the Congress(I). The fact is that the Congress(I) is staying put because of the political vacuum. In the recently held Provident Fund Trustee Board elections in two jute mills, CPM lost its overwhelming majority to the faction-ridden Congress(I). How is it that despite so much shouting against Mrs. Gandhi's authoritarianism and New Delhi's stepmotherly behavior towards this hapless state, Mrs. Gandhi's men can still derive comfort without any difficulty?

Telugu Desam or no Desam, Andhra Pradesh is always in the news, not for the ambitious Telugu Ganga project, but for the Naxalite activities. The Rama Raos are unnerved because of the escape of Kondapalli Seetharamaiah from the Osmania general hospital. Panic. Not in Hyderabad alone but also in Bombay and Indore. The top police notches of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra have been meeting frequently to crush the "Naxalite menace." The police reportedly have drawn up a strategy to round up all the top-ranking Naxalite leaders. The People's War group led by Seetharamaiah has been a source of concern for Rama Rao. But they were there even before he assumed office with a kind of cine blitz. Seetharamaiah's presence may further hasten the process of 'Naxalism' spilling over into the bordering Bastar in Madhya Pradesh and Sironcha in Maharashtra. The Telugu Desam government has sought Rs 120 million from the Center to revamp the anti-Naxalite operations, particularly, in Khammam, Karimnagar, Warangal, Adilabad, Nalgonda, and Nizamabad districts in Telengana and East and West Godavari districts.

That the 'extremists' have powerful hold over the tribals spread over a vast area comprising Sironcha, Aheri, Allapalli and Ettapalli talukas is beyond any dispute. But the point of contention is the demand for higher wages than the normal Rs 6.40 a day for the tendu (bidi) leaf collectors, the tribals. Last year the Mad-

ia tribals, otherwise meek, under the leadership of the Naxalites, particularly the CPI(ML), People's War Group, refused to obey the dictates of the tendu contractors who have the right connections in the corridors of power and caused enough trouble for the authorities. The revenue authorities apprehend a similar situation this year too. With the plucking season (April-June) of tendu leaves approaching they are more worried than ever before. They cannot concede higher wages as it will unmistakably increase the political influence of the Naxalites but they cannot carry on the business either without bettering relations with the tribal workers. A double-edged sword indeed! It cuts both ways.

Ironically, the Maharashtra government proposed in May last to raise a horse squad to tackle the Naxalites. At one stage, they were talking about a dog squad too. But neither horses nor dogs can tame the situation. Both the proposals were subsequently dropped due to their absurdity. One police officer was candid enough to realize the reality: "There is already a problem-looking after the policemen in this region. How shall we look after their horses."

This is the crux of the matter. It is better to leave the horses to the care of turf clubs. The Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra had hopefully chosen the path of economic attrition with a view of finishing the wage laborers off. As a first step, they rendered jobless some 10,000 tribals working on the daily basis and making them feel let down by the extremists. But the bureaucracy looks a divided house over the issue. According to some officials, the measures would be counter-productive. Mr. Ratnakar Gaikwad, the Collector of Gadchiroli district, describes the situation as 'alarming' while Mr. SWH Naqvi, divisional forest officer, Sironcha, simply does not know how to square up. In fact some officers are said to have suggested a political situation instead of police action. But not a single political party, much less Congress(I), has anything to offer to the starving tribals.

Seetharamaiah who led the Gond tribal uprising in 1981 at Indervelli in Adilabad district where 13 tribals were killed, may add a new dimension to the ongoing movement. The police officials have no respite from guessing. They can just step up their 'encounters.'

The non-Congress(I) governments can improve their ties with the Center only hawking the Naxalite danger. It works. At least, on this score, the Center is not stepmotherly and money flows without the sanction of the Planning Commission. The leftists in West Bengal have no problems in getting more EFR battalions while Rama Rao, otherwise hostile to Congress(I), is taken into confidence by the Congress(I) High Command. Of the ten groups said to be operating in the Andhra region, none is being spared by the establishment. Chandrapulla Reddy now carries Rs 100,000 over his head. All things considered a bigger confrontation may be ahead. Sironcha is again going to hit the headlines.

(from FRONTIER)

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Undertrial Kept in Mental Asylum for 27 Years

Shyam Sunder Mishra, a qualified engineer of Etawah, was kept in a lunatic asylum for 26 years as an undertrial prisoner and finally released because there was no case against him. Now he is struggling in poverty while the government offers no compensation for the years of imprisonment.

Mishra, now 62, was arrested in March 1957 in connection with the death of his wife under mysterious circumstances. The doctors decided he was insane and sent him to a lunatic asylum. Twenty-six years later, the police discovered that the man they had been holding as an undertrial had no charges against him. At the same time, the asylum found that Mishra was no longer insane. He was released on July 30 last.

government so that he may spend his "last days in peace and comfort."

Mishra's case is not the first of its kind. In recent months alone, several cases have come to light where people have been jailed for as long as 30 years and more — as undertrials. Gomio Hoi was sentenced to four years but ended up spending 40 years in a lunatic asylum. For every such case that comes to light, there must be many that do not. An editorial in the Indian Express wonders "who is really criminal and insane — these behind bars or in lunatic asylums, or those who preside over such a system."

The release came four years after



Mr. Shyam Sunder Mishra, who spent 26 years and four months as an undertrial prisoner without trial, after his release at his home in Etawah town of UP.—Express photo.

Shyam Sunder Mishra has no means of livelihood. A correspondent for the Indian Express found him in a slum area in Etawah. Mishra wrote to the Prime Minister and the UP Chief Minister last August for rehabilitation grants from their relief funds but got no reply.

In November, Mishra filed a petition with the Supreme Court seeking compensation for his illegal detention by the UP

Mishra's cousin, a Gwalior advocate, went to court seeking relief. The police first said he faced criminal charges and could not be released. Then the advocate wrote to the Union Home ministry and the UP chief minister. After the UP government wrote to the superintendent of the Benares lunatic asylum, the police and the asylum discovered simultaneously that he faced no charges and that he had been cured of his insanity.

Released Naxalite Interviewed

Kaliaperumal, a Tamil Nadu CPI-ML leader imprisoned in the early 1970s, was recently released on indefinite parole. His sons and brother had also been arrested and kept in jail until Kaliaperumal was released.

A reporter from the Indian Express interviewed Kaliaperumal. The questioning, expectedly, focused on Kaliaperumal's attitude to violence more than on his general views or his sufferings in jail.

Kaliaperumal asked, "Don't you hit back when someone attacks you? Our position is also similar. Violence is only another form of self-defense." He followed it up with the theory of how much of the violence in the country was perpetrated directly or indirectly by the government. He pointed out how the government itself was responsible for the violence in Assam by forcing an election on an unwilling people. The government had also turned a blind eye to films that had violence as an integral part; persons who had acted in such violent films were now preaching against violence from political platforms, he said.

"While every party in the country claims that it has nothing to do with violence, once it comes to power, it uses violence as a tool to fight the Opposition," he said.

Sporting an unkempt beard and peering through his thick glasses, Kaliaperumal spoke in simple chaste Tamil, the only complicated terms butting in when expounding communist ideology.

One Day General Strike in Bombay

A general strike called jointly by the opposition parties and trade unions on Jan 31 in Bombay was a total success. The strike was in protest against the killing of five people in police firing in January during a protest by farmers who were agitating for better compensation for their land being taken over by the government to build a new Bombay port.

Buses and taxis were not running and the roads were deserted. Most factories, markets, shops, hotels, and cinemas were closed. Over 1000 people were arrested. Maharashtra's Chief Minister Vasantrao Patil of Congress(I) conceded that the strike was a success from the organizers' point of view, but he refused to meet the farmers' demands for better compensation.

Mizo National Front Banned

The Mizo National Front (MNF) was once again banned by the central government on Jan 21. A notification to this effect issued in New Delhi said that the MNF and other organizations set up by it has been declared unlawful under the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967. The MNF leaders had been negotiating for many years with the government to develop an understanding which would lead to greater autonomy for the state and the participation of the MNF in the functioning of the administration of Mizoram. The talks had been broken off by the Center many a times in the past with the MNF leader Laldenga being intermittently put under house arrest. He was finally asked to leave the country.

Prominent Economist Refutes Govt Appraisal of Sixth Plan

[We print below excerpts from an article by Raj Krishna, a prominent economist, in the Economic and Political Weekly, taking issue with the Mid-Term Appraisal by the Planning Commission of the Sixth Plan.]

This paper critically examines some claims made in the Mid-Term Appraisal of the Sixth Five-Year Plan about the growth of national income, investment, and reduction in the incidence of poverty in the first three years of the Plan.

GROWTH

The growth rate of the economy is reported to have exceeded 5% in the last three years. But if this figure is intended to create the impression that the long-term rate of growth of the economy has accelerated, it is grossly misleading. For the kind of acceleration recorded in the last three years can be shown to have occurred in every three-year period after a year of negative growth. Growth was negative in 1957-58, 1965-66, 1972-73 and 1979-80. If the year-to-year growth rates for the three years following these years of negative growth are averaged, we see a growth rate exceeding 4% for 1966-69 and exceeding 5% for the other three-year periods. With 1966-67 as a base year, the growth rate averaged 5.9% during 1967-70.

The real issue is whether the long-run growth rate of national income shows any sign of acceleration. When a semi-log trend equation is fitted to all the 33 available observations on national income (1951-52 to 1982-83), the annual rate turns out to be 3.51%.

If and when there is any statistically valid indication of the long-term growth rate rising above 3.5%, it would be very gratifying for any economist to recognize and report the fact. But unfortunately there is no such sign yet.

INVESTMENT

The Planning Commission has noted that public sector investment exceeded the target in the first three years of the Sixth Plan. Since the target of public investment was fixed in 1979-80 prices, the actual investment can be compared with the target investment only after adjustment for inflation. The deflated public investment over the first three years of the Plan adds up to 44% of the five-year target for the whole Plan period. Thus the actual public investment has been about 73% of the interpolated target. The same ratio is obtained for the total Plan outlay including current Plan outlay as well as

POVERTY

RAJ KRISHNA

investment. When this ratio is compared with the same ratio computed for earlier Plans, it appears that, unless the Sixth Plan ratio improves in the next two years, the shortfall of real Plan outlay in the current Plan (27%) will be larger than in any earlier Plan. Drastic midstream readjustment of targets and expenditures will be inevitable.

As regards poverty, an unprecedented claim has been made by the Planning Commission. It has been estimated that the poverty ratio (the percentage of people below the poverty line) has fallen from 51.1% to 41.5% during the first two years of the Sixth Plan. The number of people below the poverty line is thus reported to have gone down from 339 million to 282 million, that is by 57 million, within two years.

The Appraisal does not spell out the methodology with which the new, remarkable rate of poverty reduction has been computed. The only clue is provided by the following sentence:

"The number and percentage of people below the poverty line may be estimated on the basis of the assumption that increase in real income is uniform in all the expenditure classes and the number of families brought above the poverty line is relatable directly to the corresponding expenditure in IRDP and NREP."

In short, poverty reduction is linked with (1) the overall growth of income, and (2) the expenditure on the two major anti-poverty programs.

The linking of the poverty ratio with per capita income can hardly be justified, because there has been no significant correlation between the two. During 1960-74, the rural poverty ratio was stable around 58% and the urban ratio around 50% while income per capita was growing at the low annual rate of 1 percent a year.

The second link, between expenditure on rural development schemes and the reduction of poverty is even more fragile.

It seems that all the beneficiaries of the two major anti-poverty schemes, the Integrated Rural Development Program and the National Rural Employment Program, in the first two years of the Sixth Plan are supposed to have moved above

(from the Econ. & Pol. Weekly)

the poverty line. This supposition is clearly unwarranted in the light of widely known facts about the implementation of these schemes. It is known that a high proportion of the funds earmarked for these schemes remains unutilized in many states. The misappropriation of funds by bank officers, block officers and other functionaries of the development agencies is often so large that only a small proportion of the funds really trickles down to the target groups. Non-target groups such as landlords, large farmers, traders and contractors use their power and ingenuity to appropriate the bulk of the funds and other benefits of the schemes.

The number of IRDP beneficiaries in the first two years of the Plan is reported to be 5.6 million. The NREP employment converted into equivalent person-years adds up to 2.12 million. The total number of beneficiaries of the two schemes over two years is thus 7.72 million 'persons'. The expenditure per beneficiary (including medium-term credit) can be computed to be Rs 1,547 in the first year and Rs 2,828 in the second. It is impossible to believe that total assistance of this order should suffice to raise a person, not to mention a family, permanently above the poverty line.

Even making the strong assumption that the figures of outlays and beneficiaries are correct (without double counting), that there are no leakages, and that all beneficiaries did cross the poverty line, the maximum number of poverty-line-crossers in the first two years of the Plan could only be 7.7 million and not 57 million.

In the past, the ministries implementing various schemes exaggerated their benefits and the number of their beneficiaries, but the Planning Commission used to maintain a critical objectivity about these data. But now it seems that the Planning Commission has ceased to be objective, and simply aggregates the dubious claims of the ministries.

A CONCLUDING REMARK

There is no lack of knowledge of the policy measures required to raise the rate of growth, particularly the rate of industrial growth, to a high level, and to eliminate poverty directly within two decades. But it can be safely predicted that the needed measures will not be adopted, and if adopted, their implementation by the present inefficient and cynically corrupt apparatus will not allow the expected results to materialize.

ECONOMY

India Decides to Cut Tea Export

The Government of India announced recently that it would temporarily ban exports of cut, tea and curl (CTC) tea. As a result of this announcement, tea prices in the world markets went to record levels. According to the Indian Tea Board officials, the ban was designed to safeguard local supplies and insure reasonable prices in Indian shops. However it is generally believed that the cut in exports of tea was decided to boost prices at the world market so that the tea suppliers could make some extra profit. The tea prices in the world markets have remained almost constant in absolute terms between the late 1977 and 1982.

India's Economic Times however disagreed with this move of a cut in exports. In an editorial, it warned that in a year or two, the international market may be flooded with tea. The editorial called for a thorough policy review on tea exports.

India's tea production was expected to reach approximately 1.3 billion pounds in 1983, and accounts for over 30% of world output. Over 35% of tea produced in India is exported and tea is India's largest foreign exchange earner.

India Not to Draw Final Installment of IMF Loan

According to a report in the Wall Street Journal, Indian government will forego the last 1.1 billion dollars installment of a 3 year 5.2 billion dollar loan from the International Monetary Fund. The Journal quoted Prime Minister Indira Gandhi as saying that India did not need that money because of increased foreign exchange reserves. Gandhi added, "I hope that India's decision not to draw the balance of credit will help the IMF though in a small way to give more help to other developing countries."

The IMF loan had generated a great deal of controversy in the country because of possible secret conditions attached to the loan regarding domestic policies on export-import, social programs, financial measures. It was reported few months ago that the IMF was putting further pressure on India with regards to certain policies.

Opposition leaders however charged that Gandhi's announcement was an election-year gimmick.

The IMF loan had been sought to pay India's rising import bill. Since then the domestic production has risen considerably. Crude oil production is estimated at nearly 25.1 million tons, almost a 25% increase over the 21.1 million tons of 1982. Net import for oil in 1983 was estimated to be 9.1 million tons, down from net import of 12.9 million tons in 1982.

Filmotsav 1984

Filmotsav '84, the yearly international film festival was held this year in Bombay. And, unlike the past festivals, there were quite a few African films. Film festivals in India have been criticized in the past for not giving enough importance to the Third World cinema movement.

Speaking at the festival, Souheil Ben Barka, a Moroccan film director, appealed to film makers in the Third World not to buckle under pressure by vested interests and to join hands and challenge the establishment. He was quoted as saying that "No one should delude himself. The intellectual underdevelopment is even more dangerous and harmful than economic underdevelopment as it takes the human being back the state of an animal."

In another development, it was reported that China would soon hold a festival of Indian films.

Chipko Reaches Karnataka

(continued from page 7)

The farmers, after launching the Chipko movement, were expecting the Forest Minister to visit the area and take a decision after listening to their grievances. They were surprised to learn that the police force would be used to help the contractors. A letter from the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Sirsi, issued to the contractors on November 21, reads: "The logging work entrusted to you shall have to be continued with sufficient progress of work from time to time, as per terms of the agreement. In case you find any obstruction from the members of the public under the garb of 'Chipko' movement, you may seek police assistance for smooth working."

The Yuvak Mandalies have responded by pledging solidarity and adherence to non-violence to achieve their objective of nature protection. The movement is gaining popularity. The press has welcomed the movement as a number of Kannada papers have come out with special features and leading articles on the movement. A young journalist from Kerala went from village to village to collect firsthand information to spread in the Western Ghat region of Kerala, where similar conditions exist.

(excerpted from the Indian Express)

AITUC wants Alliance with CITU

A merger of the All-India Trade Union Congress, controlled by CPI, and the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, controlled by CPM, was suggested in Bangalore on December 16 at the 32nd session of AITUC, as a first step in achieving trade union unity in the country.

The idea was mooted by the AITUC general secretary, Indrajit Gupta, who said there was no objective reason why the merger could not take place on the basis of four mutually agree principles of class struggle, secularism and national unity, peace and anti-imperialism, and international working class solidarity.

N.K.Krishnan, chairman of the presidium of the session, called on trade unions that believed in fighting imperialism abroad and monopoly at home to unite into a single trade union stream to give a new thrust to the movement.

The session was also addressed by Samar Mukherjee of CITU and R.L.Thakkar of INTUC. Karnataka's chief minister was the chief guest.

Tax Fraud by DCM Group

Income tax authorities have unearthed a big tax fraud involving Rs 12.1 million by various companies of the Delhi Cloth Mills group, according to a statement by the Finance Minister in Parliament on December 12.

Following complaints from two Pune trusts, tax officials conducted searches in various offices and seized incriminating documents that revealed that several companies in the DCM group had credited huge sums as donations to bogus bank accounts opened in the name of some trusts and subsequently withdrawn them. The fake donation receipts were used to claim deductions for donations to scientific research associations and to rural development programs.

The Finance Minister also confirmed that at least one donation of Rs 4 million had been given to Aparna Ashram, run by Dharendra Brahmachari, erstwhile court astrologer. He also said that the Ashram's tax-exempt status had expired last April.

Further investigation revealed that the Department of Science and Technology, which had originally approved the Ashram as a scientific research association, had recommended an extension of tax exemption for another year.

All-Party Meet at Colombo on Lanka Tamils

An all-party conference convened by President Jayawardene met recently in Colombo to discuss the sensitive issue of the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and the major opposition party Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) which is very influential with the Sinhala community, both had earlier expressed reservations about participating at the conference in view of their doubts regarding Jayawardene's intentions. However, both TULF and SLFP participated in the conference along with all the other major political parties of Sri Lanka as well as representatives of various religious groups in the country. The very fact that such a conference has been held permitting a negotiated settlement of the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka is perceived as a major positive development in the island which had witnessed unprecedented violence in the earlier months.

In convening the round table conference, President Jayawardene suggested a 14-point proposal, the very first of which stipulated the giving up of the idea of a separate state. Other proposals included the merger of district development councils within a province after a referendum in the district. The regional councils so constituted were to be allocated areas of responsibility not controlled by the President and the Parliament. The regional councils to be empowered to enact laws and exercise executive powers in relation to the same. Formation of High Courts, regional services of those serving in the region, and regional public service commissions were also proposed. The public

R.N.Raju

services of Sri Lanka, the armed services and the police services are to reflect the national ethnic composition.

TULF leaders expressed their initial reservation about participating in the conference because of their opposition to the inclusion of some of the points in the 14-point suggestion made by the President. In particular, they saw the precondition that the demand for a separate state be given up as reflecting an hardened attitude on the part of the President. They were also critical of the fact that the powers of the district and regional councils were not clearly specified. The parties which depend predominantly on the backing of the Sinhala community saw in the proposals an excess of concessions being offered to the minority Tamils. Also the fact that the Indian government had intervened in the issue caused concern among the major political parties of the island.

Both the United National Party of President Jayawardene and the opposition SLFP led by former Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike are caught by conflicting internal political forces in their attempts to address the ethnic issue. Factions within the two parties would like to adopt a militant pro-Sinhala posture to appease extreme elements in the majority community whose support is important to their political survival. At the same time as the major national parties, they would like to maintain their pre-

sence and some influence among the minority Tamil community as well. Probably, more importantly, they would like to avoid the internal ethnic conflict develop to a scale where it could invite external intervention especially from the part of India. It is as a result of these conflicting trends, the two major parties are seen exhibiting somewhat contradictory postures at different times. Another additional factor has been the mutual struggle for preeminence among the UNP and the SLFP. Indeed, the absence of Sirimavo Bandaranaike at the conference table has been publicly attributed to the denial of civic rights to her by the UNP government.

The very occurrence of the Colombo conference and its agenda as proposed by President Jayawardene are said to be influenced by the special envoy of the Indian Prime Minister, Parthasarathy. His efforts in mediating between various political parties and ethnic groups have won some praise in Colombo on the one hand, while also causing some concern about the extent of external intervention in a domestic issue. However, the participation of all the political parties and the involvement of the representatives of all the ethnic and religious groups at the conference augurs well for the peaceful solution of the problem in Sri Lanka. Symbolic of the spirit of ethnic harmony, the UNP delegation to the conference has included a Tamil member while the Democratic Workers Congress representing the Indian Tamils has included a Sinhalese member in its delegation.

Govt Changes Rules on IIT Reserved Seats

The central government decided last June to lower the norms for admission to IITs for members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, in order to fill the quotas set aside for them. This action has led to dissension and unhappiness among the directors of the IITs and open quarrelling with P.V. Indiresan, the director at Madras.

The Parliamentary Committee concerned with scheduled castes and scheduled tribes found that the percentage of reserved seats in the IITs that remained unfilled in 1981 and 1982 was 76% and 80% for the scheduled castes and 96% and 92% for the scheduled tribes. That is, very few of the reserved seats were actually filled by members of the concerned groups, although the standards for admission were somewhat lower for the two groups than for the general public.

How to deal with this has been the topic of some debate among IIT directors and other concerned people. One view, most strongly articulated by Indiresan, is that the standards for admission should not be lowered for dalits and tribals; rather, there should be a focus on early childhood and schooling. IIT Madras now has an intensive coaching scheme for dalits and tribals, which tries to prepare promising students from the oppressed communities for the entrance examinations. The results have not been spectacular; Indiresan feels that promising students have to be spotted and special teaching begun at a much earlier age.

This view was rejected by the Parliamentary Committee. It rejected the idea of training from the kindergarten level on the grounds that it would cost Rs 4 billion. The committee even rejected the special coaching of high school students as being time-consuming and unlikely to improve the intake of SC and ST students immediately. Instead, the Committee directed the Education Ministry to admit the meritorious SC and ST students, regardless of their high school grades compared to others, to fill the quotas and then give them special coaching.

Accordingly, the government has lowered the norms and some dalits and tribals were admitted to the IITs this year (1983-84) with less than 40% marks in their school final examinations.

Indiresan spoke out in public on September 19 at the twentieth convocation of IIT Madras. He said the Parliamentary committee had demanded that the "international standards" of the IITs be watered down to "Indian standards" so that the reserved quota for SC and ST candidates is completely filled. He also said the committee members had bullied, insulted and abused the five directors in unprintable language.

The Education Minister has written to Indiresan expressing embarrassment and objecting to the "intemperate language" and "aspersions" cast in his speech. Indiresan in turn has requested the government to hold an inquiry to determine whether anything he said at the convocation was "factually incorrect" and whether he deserved such a "public reprimand."

Indiresan has gone on the offensive since then on the issue of academic freedom. In a letter to a daily newspaper on December 24, he writes: "If Prof. Chandrasekhar, who recently obtained the Nobel Prize, were to come to Madras, there is nobody in IIT-Madras, not any Professor, not the Director, not the Senate, not even the Board of Governors, who has the freedom to invite him to address the students. This can be done only with the prior approval of the government of India, for which several months' notice is required. It is also the rule that nobody can even mention that these restrictions hamper normal academic activity in any forum which is open to the public, even if it is a function of the institute. Writing a letter of this type is of course completely beyond the pale."

(information from the Indian Express)

A Long March

DEBASIS BHATTACHARYA
General Secretary, APDR

Thirty members of the Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR, West Bengal) started on the Calcutta-Delhi Bicycle Long March for Human Rights on Oct 12, 1983 and reached Delhi on Nov 6. They met, among others, a large number of boys and girls who do not go to school owing to the economic plight of their families. The team found that child labor is not an uncommon phenomenon. There are many primary schools without roofs on both sides of the National Highways. In many villages, the inhabitants have to go 2 km to get drinking water. Over and above all this, there is the housing problem. This is the 'roti, kapda aur makan' situation for the vast majority of citizens of a country de-chained in 1947.

In Bihar, APDR's long marchers were compelled to change their previous route via Aurangabad-Jahanabad of Gaya district as they were warned by PUCL (Bihar) not to visit these areas because they were scenes of regular attacks by the landlords and their private armies in connivance with the police.

The team found that in Bihar, landlords care a fig for the Land Ceiling Act or the Minimum Wages Act. When the peasant organizations find no other way but to launch struggles for the implementations of these acts, the police and the Bhoomi Sena, Kumar Sena and Brahmarshi Sena—private armies of the zamindars, crack down upon them. Many leaders and workers of the kisan organizations have been killed, and now police officials have decided to shoot at sight the Naxalite peasant workers of the Nalanda district.

As far as the criminals are concerned, the police have been extremely negligent, especially when weaker sections are involved. For instance, the case of a Harijan boy killed on G.T. Road at Barhi a year ago. The police have still to bring the culprits to book. On the other hand, the APDR team was told that people are killed daily in UP in the name of encounters.

(from FRONTIER)

In UP, near Fatehpur, the team noticed that many well-dressed men carry guns, endangering the security of others. The team demands that all the guns of landlord families be confiscated, the private armies of the landlords in Bihar disbanded forthwith, shoot-at-sight order in the Nalanda district of Bihar withdrawn, and landlords owning surplus land and violating the Government's Minimum Wages Act arrested and brought to book. People from Unnau under the banner of the Lok Mukti Morcha reported landlords' atrocities, resulting in the destitution of a number of families.

During the journey, the team was given a warm reception at many places in Bihar and UP by trade unions, student organizations, PUCL, Indian People's Front, and prominent individuals like Prof. Irfan Habib, Mr. Ansari, Dr. Bikram Singh. In Delhi, the team was received by the PUDR and PUCL. The marchers received cooperation by way of food and shelter from Deshbandhu school at Chinsurah, the Sikh Gurdwara at Burdwan, Ganatatrik Adhikar Raksha Swagata Samity led by Ganesh Pandey and Bijoy Pratap at Kanpur, Prof. Javeer Hussain of Patna and the Institute of Gandhian Studies at Varanasi.

During their journey, the team saw how the people live in grinding poverty, unemployment and a paralyzing fear of vested interests and officialdom. On their way, many persons asked the marchers whom they should contact for their complaints of encroachment on human rights. People expressed their utter loss of faith in all political parties, and the team was astonished that even left political parties were not sensitive to the trampling of civil liberties.

The team hopes that this Long March will help kindle in people courage to break their silence and raise their voice in protest and also prepare the field for the formation of organized bodies for the protection and extension of civil liberties and democratic rights.

Opposition Meeting Focuses on Economic Issues

(continued from page 1)

items and creation of job opportunities for all. It also called for a rapid implementation of land reform program after plugging its loop holes.

The meeting also called for a 3-point action program backing the charter of demands which is to begin as a nation wide agitation starting Feb. 13.

The Calcutta meeting was the fourth. The first meeting in Vijayawada concentrated on the concept of opposition unity, though it failed to reach any agreement on a united program; the Delhi meeting focussed on the Punjab crisis again without much success. The Srinagar meeting's theme was the Center-State relations on which concrete program evolved. The Calcutta meeting might be the most positive in bringing the opposition together as it concentrated on economic issues faced by the majority of the people and decided to push divisive issues such as the foreign policy, etc. aside for the time being.

The resolution of the meeting also said that in Karnataka, Indira Congress had used bribery to buy legislators, and that in Jammu and Kashmir, the operation topple has assumed a dangerous turn, with the minions of Indira Congress continuing to indulge in instigations of violence to destabilize the democratically elected government.

Addressing the meeting, West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu said that the opportunism of the Gandhi's party and government was limitless. Basu called discussion at the recently held Congress convention in Calcutta as in "the nature of a command performance in which an open conspiracy was hatched against all opposition parties." Basu asserted that, "A strong India can be built by legitimate sharing of powers between the Center and states."

The next opposition meeting is to take place in Madras in April.

Madness in Punjab Continues

KISHAN BAJWA

Despite tremendous pressure as well as denunciations by extremists, Akali Dal President Harchand Singh Longowal moved his date of next "direct action" from Jan. 26 to Feb. 26 giving the Gandhi government another month to consider the demands of the Akali Dal. It does not seem however that Longowal will get any concessions from the Center during that period because of the hardened attitude of the government which is not interested in negotiations but is keen in seeing the Akali leaders fight among themselves.

Longowal also called for a general strike in Punjab on Feb. 8 to press for the demands. Longowal appealed to the people of Punjab to back this month's strike. Following Longowal's announcement, extremists, some of whom belonging to the All India Sikh Federation, which is headed by a Bhindranwale's crony, denounced Longowal as a traitor and chanted slogans against his new program.

BHINDRANWALE CALLED CONGRESS(I) AGENT

In a related development, a representative of Longowal group Mrs. Nirlep Kaur said in a news conference in New Delhi that extremist leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was a Congress(I) agent inside the Akali Dal.

INDIRA CONGRESS INTERFERENCE

Congress(I) leaders have continued to interfere in Gurdwara politics in Delhi, siding with anti-Longowal factions. Pro-Longowal and Pro-Indira factions have clashed recently. In Nov., Delhi Lieut. Governor Jag Mohan had sent police in the Sisganj Gurdwara in Nov. to help Pro-Indira factions to occupy the Gurdwara Management offices. Later, members of Pro-Longowal faction had been stopped by the police from participating in the elections, and some even arrested. Recently, Headmaster Sucha Singh, the general secretary of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee and a Longowal supporter, has asked the committee's president Harbans Singh Manchanda to call a general meeting to decide which faction has the majority. Manchanda on the other hand belongs to the

pro-Indira faction.

ANALYSIS

The situation in Punjab now appears complex with most sides, the Government, Akalis — moderate as well as extremist leadership, opposition parties, and the non-Sikh communities to share the blame. Congress(I)'s main goal has been to politically oust the Akali Dal from its powerful base in the rural area, at the same time, emerge as the savior of the non-Sikh communities, so that it can easily win the next election. Moderate Akali leadership is first and foremost interested in regaining power; it is also under tremendous pressure from their rural base to press for demands of the farming community for higher prices for agricultural products, lesser prices for inputs, more water and other concessions as Congress(I) policies in the state have not been pro-farming community. Extremist leadership's main goal has been to oust the moderate leadership by raising fundamentalist religious demands; it has been able to attract considerable support among frustrated and unemployed Sikh youths who are not interested in sticking to their family's traditional occupation of farming. Bhindranwale especially has made many statements which have instigated communal tension. Taking cue from Bhindranwale as well as many times under his orders, many Sikh diehards have gone on a rampage endangering public safety and created terror against the Nirankaris as well as some sections of the Hindu community.

Opposition parties have taken a dilly-dally attitude. On many occasions, they have supported the non-religious demands of the Akalis, however they have been compelled to come out against the Akalis whenever some Akali extremists including Bhindranwale, Talwandi and Tohra have made irresponsible statements which were not categorically denounced by Longowal and other moderates. Although the opposition keeps getting assurances from moderates like Badal, they find themselves in a quagmire. As a result, it has taken a passive

attitude because of which it neither has the support of the Sikh community nor of the non-Sikh community. The non-Sikh community, especially the Hindus, who have always kept a distance from the Akali Dal because of its religious character, have not expressed support for the Akali demands which though being couched in religious terms, are the demands of all Punjabis. The Hindus are in panic, fear and confused, awaiting government's action and Akalis' next move. They can only react to the foolish acts of some mad Sikhs.

The net outcome of all this has been the major political gains by the Congress and the increasing influence of extremists, communalists and criminals in the Akali Dal who are able to give a religious tone to their nonsense and rhetoric full of communal hatred. The moderates are not able to deliver the goods because the government undercuts them at every occasion, so they have two choices, either lose their legitimacy or not come out openly against the extremists and often get blackmailed by the extremists.

Given the designs of Congress(I) and the extremists in Akali Dal, Punjab needs a fresh attempt for the moderate Akali and Sikh leadership to sit with the opposition leaders and the representatives of the non-Sikh community to develop a common program acceptable to different groups. This does not stop the Akalis from agitating for demands specific to them, such as the religious demands. In that also, they can seek support from others, but this demarcation between religious demands and common demands should be made clear. Furthermore, it is also essential that in the agitation for specific demands which lie outside the perimeter of common demands, enough caution and care be undertaken by the Akali leadership so as not to alienate other groups. This dialog is in the best interests of the moderate leadership, Hindus as well as the opposition. The ball is the court of Akali moderates; they do not deserve and cannot get support of the opposition and non-Sikhs, if they do not make a clear demarcation from extremist politics and guarantee the Hindus that their religious rights, places of worship and property will be respected.

Goenka Award for V.K. Narasimhan

Veteran journalist V.K. Narasimhan is the first recipient of the B.D. Goenka Foundation Award for excellence in journalism. Announcing this, Achyut Patwardhan, head of the selection committee, cited Narasimhan's role during the Emergency as the editor of the Indian Express when "he had kept the flag flying."

Patwardhan said there were two overriding factors considered by the jurors: anyone who supported the Emergency or the recent elections in Assam was excluded from consideration. Patwardhan said they were on the lookout for a journalist who over a long career was able to hold the standard high. He should be the voice of the voiceless people.

Narasimhan was appointed editor of the Indian Express during the Emergency after the previous editor had been forced out under government pressure. But Narasimhan was not accommodating; he attacked Congress parliamentarians in his writings during the Emergency.

Cong(I) Celebrates Centenary Trampling Democratic Norms

(continued from page 2)

lators, forcibly kidnapping them and threatening them physically in order to gain control over them. All these methods are employed not in a secretive way but as very open and legitimate methods sanctioned by Gandhi.

At the Calcutta session, Prime Minister Gandhi accused the opposition parties of spreading communal violence in the country. While the opposition parties indeed play the role of pitting one community against another, they are merely amateurs in playing this communal "game" when compared to Cong(I). Recent communal massacres in Assam, the perpetuation of the communal and religious conflicts in Punjab and Assam are direct consequences of the policies being pursued by Indira Gandhi. While donning the mask of a friend of the minority communities, the Prime Minister does not hesitate to back Hindu communal elements in Jammu, if it would help in gaining a stronger foothold for her in Jammu and Kashmir.

An interesting feature of the Calcutta session was the presence of a delegation representing the Soviet Communist Party. That such a delegation should have been present was only appropriate if one remembers the letter written by Gandhi to the Soviet President discussing the domestic political situation in India and implicitly seeking the influence of the Soviets over the Indian Communist parties to be exercised in her favor.

Given the developments above in the past 15 years of Gandhi's rule, the Calcutta session celebrated not the traditions of the Congress founded a century ago. In contrast, the Calcutta session celebrated personal concentration of power, the absence of any norms of democracy in the functioning of the party and the state under Cong(I) control, the continuous erosion of various constitutional provisions by the ruling party, the legitimization of thuggery in inter-party relationships and in the functioning of the parliament and various legislatures, the crafty exploitation of communal differences and the willingness to involve a superpower in the domestic affairs as long as it would ensure the continued exercise of the personal power of the Prime Minister. In 1883, Calcutta saw the birth of a positive political movement, limited though it may have been in its understanding and objectives. In 1984, Calcutta saw the disease that is rapidly eating away all that is alive in the body of India. Such are the consequences of the new traditions that Cong(I) celebrated in Calcutta.

Abdullah Attacked

Munshi's Goons Attack J&K CM

(continued from page 1)

Tulba, the People's League and the Mahaz-i-Azadi, under the public safety laws. Leaders of some of these groups have repeatedly been making, over a number of years, statements which are anti-India and pro-Pakistan.

SPLIT IN FAMILY

Congress(I) has been successful in engineering a split in the Abdullah family. Previously, they had lined Abdullah's brother-in-law GM Shah with an offer for chief ministership. Earlier, Abdullah's sister was silent, now she has come out against her brother also. When this did not get anywhere in Congress(I) achieving its goals, now Abdullah's younger brother Tariq Abdullah has also been lined up against him. Tariq recently charged his brother of frittering away precious funds on conclaves "only to defame the Prime Minister" and appealing for strengthening Gandhi's hands. Begum Akbar Jahan Abdullah, the Sheikh's widow, has stood by his son.

ROLE IN OPPOSITION

In an editorial comment, the Economic and Political Weekly warned that "the near hysteria being drummed up by Indira Gandhi and her followers against the National Conference is likely to further damage an already fractured Indian polity by Punjab and most of North-east." It went to add that Congress(I) since its defeat in the June election has tried its

utmost to bring down the ministry and Dr. Abdullah has effectively countered the moves. According to the magazine, he is now being targeted for his role in bringing the national opposition together.

Giri Lal Jain also wrote recently in the Times of India that "Dr. Farooq Abdullah has taken a leading role in organizing conclaves of opposition leaders and for some reason, which is not quite clear, Indira Gandhi has acted in a manner as if his removal from office is a matter of vital national interest."

Jammu and Kashmir had assembly election last June which was also marred with violence with Congress(I) setting fire to its own headquarters and putting the blame on National Conference activists. The national media had also covered the electoral violence in a highly biased manner as later revealed by Arun Shourie and confirmed by an investigative committee of journalists. Indira Gandhi and her party, in the election campaign, raised the fear of the Pakistani takeover among the residents. Despite these attempts of Congress(I), Dr. Farooq Abdullah's National Conference party had won a clear majority in the state with the party sweeping almost all the seats in the Kashmir valley. Congress(I) could only win seats in the Jammu valley. Following the elections, Congress(I) legislators would not let the assembly meet smoothly.

lence on Gandhi and her supporters. According to Abdullah, the agitation which led to deaths (4 according to official sources and 9 according to Congress(I)) earlier was part of a conspiracy to dislodge his government. He reportedly said, "They create the situation and then they cry, 'Save us'." He added "They violate laws, create disturbances, and cry for help, which for them means central intervention and for us toppling a democratically elected government." Responding to the charges, Dr. Abdullah recently said that "Kashmir is not burning. It is the same old pleasant place which gave a ray of hope to the greatest Indians of our times. But it is obvious that we are a wronged state. We feel insulted and our patriotic pride is hurt when we are dubbed secessionists or communal. What proof and credentials are required of us to establish our bona fides." In response to a charge about allowing training camps for Sikh extremists, Abdullah said that the Akali camp was for a meeting in which even some top Congress(I) leaders of Punjab participated.

WIDE SUPPORT FOR ABDULLAH

It appears that Dr. Abdullah is aware of Gandhi's designs; he met with her recently as well as with Union Home Minister PC Sethi and told them that the law and order situation in the state was under control. Abdullah's National Conference called a one-day general strike in the state on Jan. 19 to protest against what they called the goondaism of Indira Congress; the strike was reported to be successful and peaceful.

On Jan 28, Dr. Abdullah's government also arrested about 100 right-wing Muslim fundamentalists belonging to the Jamat-i-Islami, the Islami Jamiat-u-

Selling Asiad Flats: Good or Bad?

HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Referring to the Asian Games Village flats in New Delhi, the Central Vigilance Commission's annual report for 1982 states: "Although the agreement provided for the use of first-class teakwood in door/window frames, this was substituted with M.S. sheet frames at market rates, thereby changing the terms and conditions of the contract after call of tenders and giving an unintended monetary advantage to the successful contractor. The surface finish in all these dwelling units was found to be poor. ... Many works such as half-brick walls and marble and kota stone work were found to be sub-standard, both in regard to planning and materials and in regard to execution. Lesser quantity of materials such as cement was used than specified."

For flats of such quality, the Delhi Development Authority has fixed prices ranging from Rs 720,000 to Rs 1,565,000 in foreign exchange, depending on the plinth area, which ranges from 1200 sq.ft to 2000 sq.ft. If this is shocking, so is the fact that these flats can only be bought by Indian nationals residing abroad, Indian nationals serving in international organizations either in India or abroad who can "legitimately pay in foreign exchange" and Indians "who were employees of international organizations until recently and would be able to pay in foreign exchange within the permissible period of maintenance of foreign accounts."

One has nothing against Indians residing abroad or nonresident Indians, as they have come to be known. May they multiply and mint money in their chosen pastures. Nor does one wish ill of Indians in international organizations. May they scale new bureaucratic heights and bring home fatter pay packets. One only demurs at their being treated as more equal than Indians who have never left native shores.

No doubt many will dismiss all this as emotive rhetoric. It is not a question of some people being more equal. The country needs foreign exchange. Hence the decision to sell these flats to those who can legitimately pay in it. Also one needs to recall skilled persons who are now abroad and who, should they return, could do much to push India towards the millennium.

Surely, however, it is as important to see that skilled Indians, particularly technical and medical personnel on whose training the country spends a huge amount, do not settle abroad in the first place. And extending special facilities to nonresident Indians is one way of ensuring just the opposite. The message it will convey is precisely this - go forth and seek your fortunes amid alien corn, secure in the knowledge that you will not lose anything thereby but, should you come back, be received with favors unavailable to those who never left their country.

Convention on Assam

The opposition leaders and the All Assam Students Union (AASU) appealed in a 2-day convention on Dec. 24-25 in Gauhati to President Zail Singh to withhold his approval of the Illegal Migrants (Determination of Tribunals) Bill, 1983. The bill was recently passed by the parliament. In their appeal, the leaders said that the bill was in violation of several constitutional provisions including the Citizenship Act and the Foreigners Act.

According to the Assam agitation leaders, the bill will perpetuate the presence of illegal aliens and would not solve any of the problems raised by the Assam agitation over the last 4 years. The convention also moved to dissolve the state assembly and hold new elections after the revision of the electoral rolls. Those present at the press conference held after the convention included Ravindra Varma of Janata Party, Jaswant Singh of Bharatiya Janata Party, K Unnikrishnan of Sharad Congress and AASU president Prafulla Mahanta and AASU General Secretary Bhriku Kumar Phukan. Most of these leaders had participated in tripartite negotiations held in 1982 among the government, opposition and Assam agitation leaders.

12 Million Suffer from Disability

Nearly 12 million Indians suffer from some form of disability, a United Nations study reported. The disabilities seem more common in rural India for both men and women. About 10% of the disabled suffer from more than one disability.

Locomotor disability is the biggest one with 5.3 million suffering from it, followed by visual impairment with 3.47 million, hearing disability with 3 million and speech impediment at 1.75 million.

The main cause of visual disability was cataract and corneal imperfections, while communication disabilities arose due to illness and cleft palates.

Railway Minister's Pet Project Embarrasses Officials

Railway officials are reportedly embarrassed about being made to present supplementary demands for grants to Parliament for Rs 500,000 in December. The previous supplementary budget in August was for Rs 1.6 billion.

The Rs-500,000-budget was required because A.B.A.Ghani Khan Choudhury had inaugurated construction work on three railway lines and a bridge though the items were not in the 1983-84 budget. One line is from Eklakhi to Balurghat, passing through Choudhury's Malda constituency.

A second line is to be from Mathura to Alwar, sponsored by Rajesh Pilot, Cong(I) MP from Bharatpur. The third line is from Adilabad to Pimpalkutti, expected to pass later to the constituency of the Planning Minister, S.B.Chavan.

Tarapur to Get Second-hand Spares?

Some of the "spare parts" for the Tarapur Nuclear Power Plant that India is negotiating to buy from West Germany and Italy are in fact second-hand parts from old reactors that have been shut down in those countries, according to a report by Swaminathan S. Aiyar in the Indian Express.

These old reactors are located at Gundremmingen in West Germany and Garigliano in Italy. One problem with using old parts is radioactive contamination.

Tarapur itself suffers from high radioactive levels, and has been described by some critics as the most contaminated power station in the world. Clearly it requires spare parts to replace the contaminated sections of its reactor. But it seems certain that the reactors in Europe must also suffer from a high degree of radioactivity. Some of their sections could be even more contaminated than at Tarapur, as they have completed their useful life while the Tarapur plant has not.

Confidence Motion for Hegde

The Janata government led by Ramakrishna Hegde in Karnataka won a vote of confidence of the state assembly on Jan 17 as a preemptive move to thwart any opposition Congress attempts to topple it. The government sought the confidence of the house to clear the speculation that it lost the majority because of defections engineered by Indira Congress.

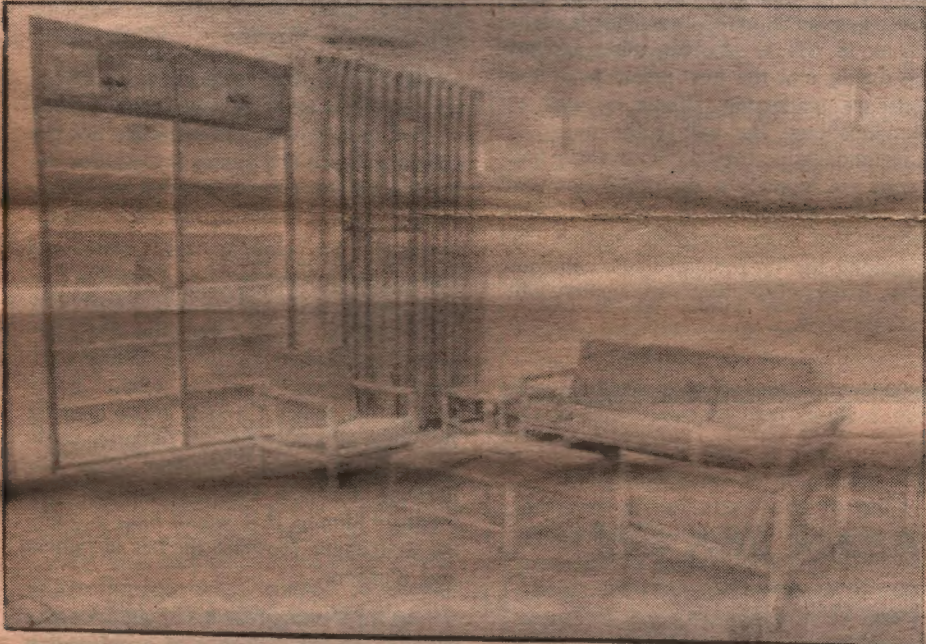
Earlier the leaders of the Janata Party and Bharatiya Janata Party in the legislature had met Governor AN Bannerji and submitted to him in a show of strength, a list of 121 legislators' signatures to prove that the Hegde government continued to hold a majority in the house. Later the Janata and BJP leaders said that they submitted the list as a measure of abundant caution and to put an end to the "kite-flying politics" of Indira Congress. The leaders stressed that they wanted to remove any uncertainty in the minds of people by "exposing the illegal unconstitutional and unethical methods" adopted by Indira Congress in the last 3 months to topple the legally elected Hegde government.

FARMERS' AGITATION

Hegde government faced challenge from a totally different source lately. The Karnataka Farmers Association began an agitation on Jan 26 demanding among other things, the establishment of a state Agricultural Prices Commission and abolition of the Fragmentation of the Land Act. Farmers blocked railway lines and courted arrests; over 27,000 were held with many released later.

Hegde urged the Association on Jan 30 to halt the agitation and come to the negotiating table. According to Hegde, his government had always been sympathetic to the genuine demands of the farmers and its doors were open to a dialog to resolve outstanding problems.

An unconventional exchange



The living room of an Asiad Village flat: "Unlike most flats, the Asiad ones are fully furnished with top-class furnishings, and there are no comparable flats sold on the open market."

(excerpted from the Indian Express)

Sahitya Akademi Awards

The Sahitya Akademi awards for 1983 have been announced to be given to 21 authors in different national languages. The award in English went to a poetic work "Latter-Day Psalms" of Nissim Ezekiel. Among others, award in Hindi went to Khuntiyon Par Tange Log by Sarveshwar Dayal Saxena, award in Bengali to, Jete Pari Kintu Keno Jabo (poetry) by Sakti Chattopadhyaya, in Tamil to Bharathi: Kalamum Karuthum by TMC Ragunathan. The awards relate to the works first published during the preceding 3 years, Jan. 1, 1980 to Dec. 31, 1982.

Suresh Joshi, a Gujarati writer, has however turned down the award for his book "Chintayami Mansa." In a letter to Dr. RS Kelkar, the Akademi secretary, Joshi outlined his reservations about the Akademi's policy of presenting cash awards to writers that does not aid in the distribution of their books. Joshi accused the Akademi of recognizing writers who "spent forces," and who are now "fossilized." He added that the Akademi had demonstrated its prejudice against recognizing new writing or new talent. The

Akademi has been criticized in the past for nepotism and of being a closed-door mutual-admiration society.

BJP for Coalition Govt at the Center

Bharatiya Janata Party President Atal Behari Vajpayee has called upon his party members to adopt the concept of a coalition government at the Center. Vajpayee was speaking at a meeting of his party's national council in Indore on Jan. 6. Vajpayee said, "there seemed to be no escape from a coalition government after the election to meet the challenge created by the Congress's misrule and steer the country and its system back to health."

In a related development, Janata Party Chief and head of the United Front Chandra Shekhar said in his new year message that the opposition unity could be brought only through a common understanding of "basis principles" and "basic problems of the people."

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